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MEMOIRS OF A PHYSICIAN.

VOLUME II.

THE WORKS OF ALEXANDRE DUMAS

Memoirs of a Physician

In Three Volumes
Volume II



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MEMOIRS OF A PHYSICIAN.

CHAPTER XLV.

MONSIEUR JACQUES' GARRET.

THE staircase, narrow and steep even at its commencement in the hall below, became still more narrow and more steep from the third story, on which Jacques lived, to the rooms above. It was therefore with considerable difficulty that they reached what was really a loft. Thérèse was right for once; it was neither more nor less than a loft, divided into four compartments, three of which were uninhabited.

To say the truth, they were all, except the one destined for Gilbert, uninhabitable.

The roof sloped precipitately down and formed an acute angle with the floor. In the middle of the slope a skylight in a broken frame, without glass, admitted both light and air; the former rather scantily, the latter superabundantly, particularly during high winds in winter.

Fortunately, summer was near; and yet, in spite of the approaching warm weather, the candle which Jacques held was nearly blown out on entering the loft.

The mattress of which Jacques had spoken so boastingly lay on the floor, and at the first glance seemed to be in itself the whole furniture of the place. Here and there were piles of old printed papers, which had turned yellow at the edges from age, and in the midst of them were some books half gnawed away by rats.

From two cords which were stretched from one side of the loft to the other, and the first of which was nearly strang-

ling Gilbert, hung, dancing in the night breeze, several paper bags containing kidney-beans dried in their pods, a few bundles of aromatic herbs, some household linen, and several articles of female attire almost in rags.

"It is not a very handsome place," said Jacques, "but sleep and darkness make a humble cabin equal to a sumptuous palace. Sleep, my young friend, as you ought to sleep at your age, and to-morrow morning you may believe that you have slept in the Louvre. But, above all things take care of fire."

"Yes, monsieur," said Gilbert, a little bewildered at all that he had heard and seen.

Jacques left the room smiling, then returned.

"To-morrow we shall have some conversation," said he; "you will have no objection to work, will you?"

"You know, monsieur, that, on the contrary, to work is my strongest wish."

"That is right," said Jacques, and he turned away.

"To work in an honourable way, you understand, monsieur," added the punctilious Gilbert.

"I know of no other, my young friend; so, then, good-night."

"Good-night, and thank you, monsieur."

Jacques retired, closed the door, and Gilbert was left alone in his garret.

At first amazed, then stupefied at the thought that he was in Paris, he asked himself could this really be Paris? could there be in Paris such rooms as his?

He then reflected that, in reality, Monsieur Jacques was bestowing charity on him, and as he had seen alms bestowed at Taverney, not only did his surprise subside, but gradually gave way to gratitude; so much difference was there in the manner of performing the two acts.

Then, candle in hand, and taking every precaution against fire, as recommended by Jacques, he went over all parts of his garret; thinking so little of Thérèse's clothes that he would not take even an old gown to serve him for a quilt.

He stopped at the piles of printed papers. They roused his curiosity to the utmost; but they were tied up, and he did not touch them.

With outstretched neck and eager eye he passed from these parcels to the bags of kidney-beans. The bags were made of very white paper also printed, and were fastened together by pins.

In making rather a hurried movement, he touched the rope with his head and one of the bags fell. Paler and more frightened than if he had been discovered breaking open a strong box, Gilbert hastened to gather up the beans scattered on the floor, and to return them to the bag.

During this process he naturally looked at the paper, and mechanically read a few words. These words excited his interest; he pushed aside the beans, and sitting down on his mattress he read with eagerness; for the words were so completely in unison with his own character and feelings that he could almost imagine them to have been written, not only for, but by himself. They were as follows:—

“Besides, grisettes, tradesmen’s daughters, and filles-de-chambre never presented any temptation to me; I was influenced by ladies alone. Every one has his whim, and this was mine. I do not agree with Horace on this point. It is not, however, mere admiration of rank or wealth which induces this preference; it is the superior delicacy of complexion, the soft white hands, the becoming attire, the air of delicacy and order exhibited in the whole person, the taste which appears in every gesture and every expression, the dress so much finer and better formed, the shoes of more delicate workmanship, the more judicious blending of ribbons and laces, the hair arranged with superior care. Thus adorned, I should prefer the plainest features to beauty without them. This preference may be—and I feel that it is—very ridiculous, but my heart has made it almost in spite of me.”

Gilbert started, and the perspiration burst from his forehead; his thoughts could not be better expressed, his

desires more clearly defined, nor his tastes more perfectly analysed. But Andrée, though thus adorned, did not require these auxiliaries to set off "the plainest features." All these were subservient to her peerless beauty.

After this came a delightful adventure of a young man with two young girls. Their setting out all together on horseback was related, and all the pretty little fears of the ladies were described. Then their nocturnal return was told in the most charming style.

Gilbert's interest increased; he unfolded the bag and read all that was in it; then he looked at the pages, that he might, if possible, go on regularly with what was so interesting. The paging was not regular, but he found seven or eight bags which seemed in the narrative to have some connection. He took out the pins, emptied the beans on the floor, put the sheets together, and proceeded to read.

He was thinking of the happiness he should have, passing the whole night in reading, and the pleasure he should find in unpinning the long file of bags yet untouched, when suddenly a slight crackling was heard; the candle, being low, had heated the copper around it, it sank in the melted grease, a disagreeable odour filled the loft, and in a moment all was darkness.

This event took place so quickly that Gilbert had no time to prevent it, and he could have wept with vexation at being interrupted in the middle of his reading. He allowed the papers to slip from his hands on the heap of beans near his bed, threw himself on his mattress, and in spite of his disappointment soon slept profoundly.

He did not awake until roused by the noise of taking off the padlock with which Jacques had closed the door the night before. It was broad daylight, and as Gilbert opened his eyes he saw his host enter softly.

His eyes immediately rested on the kidney-beans scattered on the floor, and the bags turned into their original form. Jacques' glance had taken the same direction.

Gilbert felt the blush of shame covering his cheeks, and scarcely knowing what he said, he murmured, "Good-morning, monsieur."

"Good-morning, my friend," said Jacques; "have you slept well?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Are you a somnambulist?"

Gilbert did not know what a somnambulist was, but he understood that the question referred to the beans no longer in their bags, and to the bags despoiled of their contents.

"Ah, monsieur," said he, "I understand why you ask me that question. Yes, I have been guilty of this misconduct; I humbly confess it, but I think I can repair it."

"Yes, but why is your candle burned out?"

"I sat up too late."

"But why sit up?" asked Jacques, distrustfully.

"To read, monsieur."

The old man's eyes wandered with increasing interest all round the garret.

"This first leaf," said Gilbert, taking up the first page which he had unpinned and read,— "this first leaf, which I looked at by chance, interested me so much; but, monsieur, you, who know so much, do you know what book this is taken from?"

Jacques glanced carelessly at it and said, "I don't know."

"It is a romance, I am sure," said Gilbert, "and a charming romance too."

"A romance? Do you think so?"

"Yes, for love is spoken of here as in romances, only much better."

"Well, as I see at the foot of this page the word 'confessions,' I think that it may be a true history."

"Oh, no! The man who speaks thus does not speak of himself. There is too much frankness in his avowals, too much impartiality in his judgments."

"You are wrong," answered the old man, quickly; "the

author wished to give an example of that kind to the world."

"Do you know who is the author?"

"The author is Jean-Jacques Rousseau."

"Rousseau?" cried the young man, impetuously.

"Yes; these are some leaves from his last work."

"So this young man, as he speaks of himself here, poor, unknown, almost begging on the highway, was Rousseau,—that is to say, the man who was one day to write 'Le Contrat Social,' and 'Emile'?"

"The same,—or rather not the same," said the old man, with an expression of deep melancholy; "no, not the same; the author of 'Le Contrat' and 'Emile' is the MAN, disenchanted with the world, life, glory, almost with the Deity himself; the other, the other Rousseau, is the CHILD, entering a world rosy as the dawn,—a child with all the joys and all the hopes of that happy age. Between the two Rousseaus lies an abyss which will forever prevent them from being one,—thirty years of misery."

The old man shook his head, let his arms sink by his side, and appeared lost in reverie.

Gilbert was delighted, not saddened, by what he heard.

"Then," said he, "all that I read last night was not a charming fiction?"

"Young man, Rousseau has never lied; remember his motto, 'Vitam impendere vero!'"

"I have seen it, but as I do not know Latin I did not understand it."

"It means to give one's life for the truth. But my wife must have risen by this time. Let us go down; a man determined to work can never begin the day too early. Rouse, young man, rouse."

"And so," said Gilbert, "it is possible that a man of such an origin as Rousseau may be loved by a lady of rank? Oh, heavens! what it is to inspire with hope those who, like him, have dared to raise their eyes above them!"

"You love," said Jacques, "and you find an analogy between your situation and that of Rousseau?"

Gilbert blushed, but did not answer this interrogation.

“But all women,” said he, “are not like those of whom I read; how many are proud, haughty, disdainful, whom it would be only folly to love!”

“And yet, young man,” replied the other, “such occasions have more than once presented themselves to Rousseau.”

“That is true, monsieur. Pardon me for having detained you, but there are some subjects which intoxicate me, and some thoughts which make me almost mad.”

“Come, come! I fear you are in love!” said the old man.

Instead of replying, Gilbert commenced to make up the bags again with the help of the pins, and fill them with the kidney-beans. Jacques looked on.

“You have not been very splendidly lodged,” said he; “but, after all, you have had what was necessary, and if you had been earlier up you might have inhaled through your window the perfume of the garden trees, which, in the midst of the disagreeable odours that infest a great town, is certainly very agreeable. The gardens of the Rue Jussienne are just below, and to breathe in the morning the fragrance of their flowers and shrubs is to a poor captive a happiness for all the rest of the day.”

“It certainly conveys an agreeable sensation to me,” said Gilbert; “but I am too much accustomed to those things to pay any particular attention to them.”

“Say rather that you have not yet been long enough the inhabitant of a town to know how much the country is to be regretted. But you have done; let us go down.”

And motioning Gilbert to precede him, he shut the door and put on the padlock.

This time Jacques led his companion directly to the room which Thérèse the evening before had named the study. Its furniture was composed of glass cases containing butterflies, plants, and minerals, a bookcase of walnut-tree wood, a long, narrow table, with a green and black

baize cover worn out by constant use, on which were a number of manuscripts arranged in good order, and four arm-chairs stuffed and covered with hair-cloth. Every article was waxed and shining, irreproachable as to neatness and cleanliness, but chilling to the eye and the heart, so dim and gray was the light admitted through the drab curtains, and so far removed from comfort were the cold ashes on the black hearth.

A little harpsichord of rosewood on four straight legs, the strings of which vibrated as the carriages passed in the street, and the slight ticking of a timepiece placed over the fireplace, were all that seemed to give life to this species of tomb.

But Gilbert entered it with profound respect. The furniture seemed to him almost sumptuous, since it was, as nearly as possible, the same as that of the château of Taverney, and the polished floor, above all, struck him with awe.

“Sit down,” said Jacques, pointing to a second little table placed in the recess of a window, “and I shall explain what occupation I intend for you.”

Gilbert eagerly obeyed.

“Do you know what this is?” asked the old man, showing him some paper ruled with lines at equal distances.

“Certainly,” said he; “it is music paper.”

“Well, when one of these leaves has been filled up properly by me,—that is, when I have copied on it as much music as it will contain,—I have earned ten sous; that is the price which I fixed myself. Do you think you can learn to copy music?”

“Oh yes, monsieur; I think so.”

“But does not all this little black dotting of spots joined together by single, double, and triple strokes, swim before your eyes?”

“Yes, monsieur. At the first glance I cannot distinguish them well, but on looking more closely I shall be able to separate one note from another; for instance, here is an F.”

"And the note above that, crossing the second line?"

"That is G."

"Then you can read music?"

"I know only the names of the notes; I do not understand their value."

"Do you know when they are minims, crotchets, quavers, and semi-quavers?"

"Oh, yes; I know that."

"And that mark?"

"It is a rest."

"And that?"

"A sharp."

"And that?"

"A flat."

"Very well. And so, with this ignorance of yours," said Jacques, his eye beginning to darken with the distrust which seemed natural to him,— "with this ignorance of yours, you speak of music as you spoke of botany, and as you would have spoken of love had I not cut you short."

"Oh, monsieur," replied Gilbert, blushing, "do not ridicule me!"

"No, my child; I am only surprised at you. Music is an art which is seldom learned until after other studies, and you told me you had received no education; in fact, that you had been taught nothing."

"That is the truth, monsieur."

"But you could not have found out of yourself that this black point was an F."

"Monsieur," said Gilbert, looking down with an embarrassed air, "in the house where I lived there was a—a— young lady who played on the harpsichord."

"Oh! the same who studied botany?"

"Yes, monsieur; and she played very well."

"Indeed?"

"Yes; and I adore music."

"All that does not account for your knowing the notes."

"Monsieur, Rousseau says that the man who enjoys the

effect without seeking to know the cause, allows half his powers to lie dormant."

"Yes, but he also says that man in acquiring that knowledge loses his joyousness, his innocence, and his natural instincts."

"What matters it, if he find in the search itself an enjoyment equal to all the pleasures which he loses?"

Jacques turned towards him, still more surprised. "Ha!" said he, "you are not only a botanist and a musician, but also a logician."

"Ah, monsieur, I am unfortunately neither a musician, a botanist, nor a logician! I can distinguish one note from another, one sign from another, that is all."

"You can sol-fa, then?"

"No, not in the least, monsieur."

"Well, no matter. Will you try to copy this? Here is some ruled paper, but take care of wasting it; it is very dear. And now I think of it, it would be better for you to take some common paper, rule it yourself, and make a trial on it."

"Oh, monsieur, I shall do whatever you recommend; but allow me to say, that this is not an occupation for my whole lifetime. It would be much better to become a public writer than copy music which I do not understand."

"Young man, young man, you speak without reflection. Is it by night that a public writer gains his bread?"

"No, certainly."

"Well, listen to me: with practice a man can copy in two or three hours at night five or even six of these pages; for that he will get three francs. A man can live on that sum; you will not contradict that, you, who would be content with six sous? Thus, you see, with two hours' work at night you could earn sufficient to enable you to attend the school of surgery, of medicine, and of botany."

"Oh," cried Gilbert, "now I understand, and I thank you from my very heart." And so saying, he seized eagerly the paper which the old man offered him.

CHAPTER XLVI.

WHO MONSIEUR JACQUES WAS.

GILBERT set to work with the greatest ardour, and his paper was soon covered with careful copies of what was placed before him. The old man looked at him for some time, and then sat down at the other table to correct printed sheets like those of which the bags containing the kidney-beans had been made.

They had passed three hours in this way, and the time-piece had just struck nine, when Thérèse entered hurriedly. Jacques raised his head.

“Quick, quick!” said she, “come into the other room! Here is another prince come to visit you. When will this procession of grandes be over?” I only hope he will not take it into his head to breakfast with us, as the Duke de Chartres did the other day.”

“Who is this prince?” asked Jacques, in a low voice.

“Monseigneur the Prince de Conté.”

At this name Gilbert let fall on his paper a *sol* which looked much more like a dinner plate than a note.

“A prince! A grande!” he muttered to himself.

Jacques left the study, smiling; Thérèse followed, and closed the door behind her.

Then Gilbert looked around, and finding that he was alone, sat bolt upright with astonishment.

“But where am I, then?” exclaimed he. “Princes, highnesses, calling on Monsieur Jacques! The Duke de Chartres, the Prince de Conté, calling on a copier of music!”

He approached the door to listen; his heart beat strangely.

The first greetings were over between Jacques and the prince, and the latter was speaking.

“I should have liked,” he said, “to take you with me.”

“Why so, monseigneur?” asked Jacques.

“To introduce you to the dauphiness. A new era is opening for philosophy, my dear philosopher.”

“A thousand thanks for your kindness, monseigneur, but it is impossible for me to accompany you.”

“Yet, six years ago, you accompanied Madame de Pompadour to Fontainebleau?”

“I was six years younger then. Now I am chained to my arm-chair by infirmities.”

“And by misanthropy.”

“And if it were so, monseigneur, you must allow that the world is not worth the trouble of putting one's self out of the way for it.”

“Well, I shall let you off for St. Denis, and the grand ceremonial; but I must take you to Muette, where madame the dauphiness will sleep the night after to-morrow.”

“Then madame arrives at St. Denis the day after to-morrow?”

“Yes, with all her retinue. Come, two leagues are easily travelled. Report bespeaks her Highness an excellent musician,—a pupil of Gluck's.”

Gilbert heard no more.

The day after to-morrow the dauphiness and all her retinue would be at St. Denis; these words suggested only one idea to him, —that the next day but one Andrée would be two leagues distant from him.

Of the two feelings which he experienced, the stronger overcame the weaker. Love put an end to curiosity. For a moment it seemed to him as if he had not room to breathe. He ran to a window to open it, but it was fastened inside with a padlock, no doubt to prevent those on the opposite side of the street from ever having an opportunity of seeing what passed in the study.

He sank on his chair.

"Oh, I will never listen at doors again," said he; "I must not try to penetrate the secrets of this man, apparently so humble, whom a prince calls his friend and wishes to present to the future Queen of France, to the daughter of emperors, whom Mademoiselle Andrée addressed almost kneeling at her feet. And yet perhaps I might hear something of Mademoiselle Andrée. No, no! I should seem like a lackey; La Brie used to listen at doors."

And he courageously retired from the door. But his hands trembled so much that he could not write, and indeed he required some more exciting pursuit to divert his thoughts; he therefore seized a book on the other table.

"'The Confessions!'" he read, with joyful surprise, "'embellished with a likeness of the author, Jean-Jacques Rousseau,' and I have never yet seen a likeness of Rousseau!" and he hastily turned the silk paper which covered the engraving.

No sooner did it meet his eye than he uttered a cry of amazement. At that moment Jacques opened the door.

Gilbert compared his face with the likeness in the book, which he held in his hand; then, pale and trembling, he let the volume fall, exclaiming, "I am in the house of Jean-Jacques Rousseau!"

"Let me see, my child, how you have copied your music," said Rousseau, smiling, and inwardly better pleased with this involuntary homage than with many of the thousand triumphs of his glorious life. And passing by the trembling Gilbert, he approached the table and commenced to examine his work. "Your notes are not badly formed," said he; "but they are carelessly joined together. Here, there should be a rest to make the time complete. Then, see, the bars which divide it are not quite straight. Make the semibreves by two semicircles; it is not important that they should join. The note made perfectly round is un-

graceful, and the stalk does not join with it so well. Yes, my friend, you are indeed in the house of Jean-Jacques Rousseau."

"Oh, pardon me, monsieur, for all the foolish words which I have uttered!" exclaimed Gilbert, clasping his hands, and ready to fall on his knees.

"Was it necessary that a prince should come to visit me," said Rousseau, shrugging his shoulders, "to enable you to discover in me the unhappy, persecuted philosopher of Geneva? Poor child! — happy in your ignorance of persecution!"

"Oh, yes, I am happy, very happy! But it is in seeing you, in knowing you, in being near you!"

"Thanks, my child, thanks. But it is not enough to be happy; you must work. Now that you have made a trial, take this rondeau and copy it on some proper music-paper; it is short and easy, — above all things observe neatness. But how did you discover — ?"

Gilbert, with a swelling heart, took up the volume and pointed to the portrait.

"Oh, yes, my likeness burned in effigy on the first page of the 'Émile!' However, the *auto-da-fé* diffuses light as well as the rays of the sun."

"Ah, monsieur, my wildest dreams never exceeded this! To live with you! My highest ambition never hoped for more!"

"You cannot live with me, my friend," said Jean Jacques, "for I do not take pupils; as for guests, you perceive that I am not rich enough to entertain them, certainly not to receive them as regular inmates."

A cold perspiration stood on Gilbert's forehead. Rousseau took his hand.

"However," said he, "do not despair. From the moment I first saw you, I have been studying your character. In it there is much which requires to be corrected, but there is also much to esteem. Learn to subdue your inclinations; distrust your pride, — that gnawing worm which is

the bane of philosophy; copy music, and wait patiently for better times."

"Oh, heavens!" said Gilbert, "I feel bewildered when I think of what has happened to me."

"What has happened to you is very simple and very natural, my child; you were flying I know not whence, for I did not seek to know your secret, and in your flight you met a man gathering plants in a wood. He had bread, you had none; he shared his with you. You did not know where to seek an asylum for the night; he offered you the shelter of his roof. The man might have been called by any name; he happened to be called Rousseau. That is the whole affair. This man said to you, the first precept of philosophy is, *Man, suffice for thyself.*' Now, my friend, when you have copied your rondeau, you will have gained your bread for this day. Copy your rondeau, therefore."

"Oh, monsieur, what kindness!"

"As for your lodging, that is yours into the bargain; only, no reading at night, or if you must have a candle, let it be your own; otherwise, Thérèse will scold. In the meantime, are you hungry?"

"Oh, no, monsieur," replied Gilbert, in a choking voice.

"There is enough left from our supper of last night to serve for this morning's breakfast. Do not stand on ceremony; this repast is the last you will get at my table, unless by invitation, if we remain friends."

Gilbert made a movement as if to speak, but Rousseau interrupted him.

"There is in the Rue Plastrière," continued he, "a modest eating-house for mechanics; you can dine there on moderate terms, for I shall recommend you to the proprietor. In the meantime, come and breakfast."

Gilbert followed Rousseau without daring to reply. He was completely subdued; but at least it was by a man superior to most other men.

After a few mouthfuls he left the table and returned to his task. He spoke truly; his emotion was so great that

it had taken away his appetite. During the whole day he never raised his eyes from the paper, and at eight in the evening, after having torn three sheets, he had succeeded in copying legibly and neatly a rondeau of four pages.

“I will not flatter you,” said Rousseau; “it is not yet well done, but it is legible. What you have done is worth ten sous; here is the money.”

Gilbert took it with a low bow.

“There is some bread in the cupboard, Monsieur Gilbert,” said Thérèse, on whom the young man’s modest demeanour, mildness, and industry, had produced a favourable impression.

“Thank you, madame,” replied Gilbert; “believe me, I shall never forget your kindness.”

“Here,” said she, holding the bread out to him.

He was about to refuse, but looking at Rousseau he saw, by the slight frown which contracted his piercing eye, and the curl which hovered on his delicately formed lips, that the refusal would wound him.

“I accept your kind offer,” said he.

He then withdrew to his little chamber, holding in his hand the six silver sous and the four copper ones which he had just received.

“At last,” said he, on entering his garret, “I am my own master. But stay—not yet, since I hold in my hand the bread of charity.”

And although he felt hungry, he laid down the piece of bread on the sill of the skylight, and did not eat it. Then, fancying that sleep would enable him to forget his hunger, he blew out his candle and stretched himself on his straw pallet.

He was awake before daybreak on the following morning, for in truth he had slept very little during the night. Recollecting what Rousseau had said about the gardens, he leaned out of the skylight, and saw below him the trees and shrubs of a very beautiful garden, and beyond the trees the hotel to which the garçon belonged, the entrance to which was from the Rue Jussienne.

In one corner of the garden, quite surrounded by shrubs and flowers, there stood a little summer-house, the windows of which were closed. Gilbert at first thought that the windows were closed on account of the earliness of the hour; but observing that the foliage of the trees had grown up against the shutters, he was convinced that the summer-house must have been unoccupied since the preceding winter at least. He returned, therefore, to his admiring contemplation of the noble lime-trees, which partially concealed from view the main body of the hotel.

Two or three times during his survey Gilbert's eyes had turned towards the piece of bread which Thérèse had cut for him the evening before; but although hunger pleaded loudly, he was so much the master of himself that he refrained from touching it.

Five o'clock struck. Gilbert was persuaded that the door of the passage must now be open; and washed, brushed, and combed,—for Rousseau had furnished his garret with all that was necessary for his modest toilet,—he descended the stairs, with his piece of bread under his arm.

Rousseau, who this time was not the first afoot, and who from a lingering suspicion perhaps, and the better to watch his guest, had left his door open, heard him descend, and narrowly observed his movements. He saw Gilbert leave the house with the bread under his arm; a poor man came up to him, and he saw Gilbert give him the bread, and then enter a baker's shop which was just opened and buy some more.

"Now," said Rousseau, "he will go to a tavern, and his poor ten sous will soon vanish."

But he was mistaken. Gilbert ate his bread as he walked along; then, stopping at a fountain at the corner of the street, he took a long draught, ate the rest of his bread, drank again, rinsed his mouth, washed his hands, and returned towards the house.

"Ha!" said Rousseau, "I fancy that I am luckier than

Diogenes, and have found a man!" And hearing Gilbert's footsteps on the stairs, he hastened to open the door.

The entire day was spent in uninterrupted labour. Gilbert brought to his monotonous task activity, intelligence, and unshrinking assiduity. What he did not perfectly comprehend, he guessed, and his hand, the slave of his iron will, traced the notes without hesitation and without mistake. By evening he had copied seven pages, if not elegantly, at least with scrupulous correctness.

Rousseau examined his work with the eye both of a critical judge and a philosopher. As a critical judge he criticised the forms of the notes, the fineness of the joinings, the spaces for the rests and dots; but he acknowledged that there was a decided improvement since the day before, and he gave Gilbert twenty-five sous.

As a philosopher he admired the strength of resolution which could bend the ardent temperament and active and athletic frame of a young man of eighteen to such constant and unceasing labour. For Rousseau had discovered that in that young heart there lurked an ardent passion; but whether ambition or love he had not yet ascertained.

Gilbert gazed thoughtfully at the money which he had received; it was a piece of twenty-four sous and a single sou. He put the sou in his waistcoat pocket, probably with the other sous which were remaining from the little sum of the day before, and grasping the silver with evident satisfaction in his right hand, he said:—

"Monsieur, you are my master, since you give me work and also lodge me in your house gratis. I think it only right, therefore, that I should communicate to you all my intentions; otherwise I might lose your regard."

Rousseau looked at him with a lowering eye. "What are you going to do?" said he. "Have you any other intention than that of working to-morrow?"

"Monsieur, for to-morrow, yes. With your permission, I should like to be at liberty to-morrow."

"What to do?" said Rousseau, "to idle?"

"Monsieur," said Gilbert, "I wish to go to St. Denis."
"To St. Denis?"

"Yes; her Highness the dauphiness is to arrive there to-morrow."

"Ah! — true; there are to be festivities in honour of her arrival."

"That is it, monsieur."

"I thought you less of a sight-seer, my young friend," said Rousseau. "I gave you credit, at first, on the contrary, for despising the pomps of absolute power."

"Monsieur —"

"Look at me,— me, whom you pretend to take for a model. Yesterday one of the royal princes came to invite me to court. Well, observe, citizen as I am, I refused his invitation,— not to go as you would go, my poor lad, on foot, and standing on tiptoe to catch a glimpse, over the shoulder of a guardsman, of the king's carriage as it passes, but to appear before princes, to be honoured by a smile from princesses."

Gilbert nodded his approbation.

"And why did I refuse?" continued Rousseau, with vehemence. "Because a man ought not to have two faces; because the man who has written that royalty is an abuse ought not to be seen bending before a king. Because I — who know that every festivity of the great robs the people of some portion of that comfort which is now scarcely sufficient to keep them from revolt—I protest by my absence against all such festivities."

"Monsieur," said Gilbert, "believe me, I comprehend all the sublimity of your philosophy."

"Doubtless; and yet, since you do not practise it, permit me to tell you —"

"Monsieur," said Gilbert, "I am not a philosopher."

"Tell me, at least, what you are going to do at St. Denis."

"Monsieur, I am discreet."

Rousseau was struck by these words; he saw that there

was some mystery concealed under this obstinate desire, and he looked at this young man with a sort of admiration which his character inspired.

"Oh, very well," said he. "I see you have a motive; I like that better."

"Yes, monsieur, I have a motive; one, I assure you, in no way connected with an idle love for pomp or show."

"So much the better,—or, perhaps, I should say, so much the worse. There is something unfathomable in your look, young man, and I seek in vain in its expression for the frankness and calm of youth."

"I told you, monsieur, that I have been unhappy," replied Gilbert, sorrowfully, "and for the unhappy there is no youth. Then, you consent to give me to-morrow to myself?"

"Yes."

"Thank you, monsieur."

"Remember, however," said Rousseau, "that whilst you are gazing at the vain pomps of the world defiling in procession before you, I shall, in one of my herbals, be passing in review the splendour and variety of nature."

"Monsieur," said Gilbert, "would you not have left all the herbals in the world the day when you went to visit Mademoiselle Galley after having presented her with the bouquet?"

"Good!" said Rousseau. "True, you are young. Go to St. Denis, my child."

Then, when Gilbert, with a joyful countenance, had left the room,—

"It is not ambition," said he, "it is love."

CHAPTER XLVII.

At the moment when Gilbert, after his hard day's labour, was munching in his loft his bread dipped in cold water, and inhaling with delight the pure air of the gardens below him, a woman mounted on a magnificent Arabian horse was advancing at full gallop towards St. Denis, along that road which was now deserted, but which on the morrow was to be crowded with so much rank and fashion. She was dressed with elegance, but in a strange and peculiar style, and her face was hidden by a thick veil. On entering the town she proceeded straight to the Carmelite Convent, and dismounting, she knocked with her delicately formed finger at the wicket, whilst her horse, which she held by the bridle, snorted and pawed the ground with impatience.

Several inhabitants of the town, struck with curiosity, gathered around her; they were attracted in the first place by her foreign attire, then by her perseverance in knocking.

“What is it you want, madame?” said one of them at length.

“You see, monsieur,” she replied, with a strongly marked Italian accent, “I wish to obtain admittance.”

“In that case, you are taking the wrong way. This gate is only opened once a day to the poor, and the hour is now past.”

“What must I do, then, to gain an audience of the superior?”

"You must knock at that little door at the extremity of the wall, or else ring at the grand entrance."

Another person now approached.

"Do you know, madame," said he, "that the present abbess is Madame Louise of France?"

"I know it, monsieur, thank you," she replied.

"*Vertudieu!* What a splendid animal!" exclaimed a dragoon, gazing in admiration at the foreigner's steed. "Now that horse, if not too old, is worth five hundred louis-d'or, as sure as mine is worth a hundred pistoles!"

These words produced a great effect on the crowd.

At that moment a canon, who, unlike the dragoon, looked only at the rider, to the exclusion of her steed, made his way towards her, and by some secret known to himself alone, opened the wicket of the tower.

"Enter, madame," said he, "and lead in your horse, if you please."

The woman, eager to escape from the gaze of the crowd, which seemed to terrify her, hurried in, and the gate was closed behind her.

The moment the foreigner found herself alone in the large courtyard, she shook the bridle loose on the horse's neck, and the noble animal, rejoiced to feel himself at liberty, made his trappings clash, and pawed the ground so loudly that the portress, who happened for the moment to be off her post, hastened out from the interior of the convent.

"What do you want, madame?" cried she, "and how did you gain admittance here?"

"A charitable canon opened the gate for me," said the stranger. "As for my business, I wish, if possible, to speak to the superior."

"Madame will not receive any one this evening."

"Yet I have been told that it is the duty of superiors of convents to admit, at any hour of the day or of the night, their sisters of the world who come to implore their

"Possibly so, in ordinary circumstances; but madame, who only arrived the day before yesterday, is scarcely installed in her office yet, and holds this evening a chapter of our order."

"Oh, madame!" replied the stranger, "I come from a great distance,—I come from Rome. I have travelled sixty leagues on horseback, and am almost exhausted."

"What can I do? The orders of the superior are positive."

"My sister, I have to reveal to your abbess matters of the highest importance."

"Return to-morrow."

"It is impossible. I have stayed one day in Paris, and already during that day— Besides, I cannot sleep at an inn."

"Why so?"

"Because I have no money."

The nun gazed in amazement at this woman, covered with jewels, and mistress of a fine horse, who pretended that she had no money to pay for a night's lodging.

"Oh, do not heed my words! Do not examine my dress!" said the young woman; "perhaps I did not speak the precise truth when I said I had no money, for no doubt I could obtain credit in any inn. But what I want is not a lodging, but a refuge."

"Madame, this is not the only convent in St. Denis, and each convent has an abbess."

"Yes, yes! I know that well; but it is not a common abbess who can protect me."

"I think you are wrong in persisting thus. Madame Louise no longer takes any interest in affairs of this world."

"What matters it to you? Only just tell her that I wish to speak to her."

"She is holding a chapter, I tell you."

"After it is over, then."

"It has scarcely begun."

I can go into the church and wait there in prayer."

"I am sorry, madame, that I cannot permit you to wait there."

"Oh, then I am mistaken! I am not in the house of God!" cried the stranger, with such vehemence of voice and look that the nun, alarmed, dared no longer oppose her wishes.

"If you be really in great distress," said she, "I shall try what I can do."

"Oh! tell madame," added the foreigner, "that I come from Rome, that I have made only two halts on the road,—one at Mayence, the other at Strasburg; that during the last four days I have only taken the time absolutely necessary for myself and my horse to regain strength to continue our journey."

"I shall tell her, sister;" and the nun hastened off.

A moment after a lay sister appeared, followed by the portress.

"Well?" exclaimed the stranger, impatient to know what reply had been sent.

"Madame says, madame," replied the lay sister, "it is quite impossible to give you an audience this evening; but that nevertheless the hospitality of the convent shall be extended to you, since you are in such urgent want of an asylum. You may follow me, therefore, sister, and if you have made so long a journey as you say, and are fatigued, you can retire to rest at once."

"But my horse?"

"Rest assured he shall be taken care of, my sister."

"He is as gentle as a lamb. He is called Djerid, and comes when addressed by that name. I entreat you will take care of him, for he is a most valuable animal."

"He shall be treated as if he were one of the king's horses."

"Thanks."

"In the mean time, conduct madame to her apartment," said the lay sister to the portress.

"Not to my apartment, to the church! I do not require sleep, but prayer."

"The chapel is open, my sister," said the nun, pointing to a little side door which gave admittance to the church.

"And I shall see the superior in the morning?" asked the stranger.

"To-morrow morning? That is also impossible."

"Why so?"

"Because to-morrow morning there will be a grand reception."

"And for whom can a reception be more necessary than for an unfortunate like me?"

"Madame the dauphiness will do us the honour to spend two hours here on her way through town to-morrow. It is a great honour for our convent, and a high solemnity for us poor nuns; so that, you understand, the abbess is most anxious that everything should be worthy of the royal guests we expect."

"But in the mean time," said the stranger, looking around with a shudder, "whilst I wait the leisure of your august superior, shall I be in safety here?"

"Undoubtedly, my sister. Our house is a refuge even for the guilty, much more for—"

"For fugitives," said the stranger. "It is well; then no one can enter here?"

"No one, — that is, not without an order."

"Oh, but if he procures an order! Good heavens! He who is so powerful that his power at times terrifies me!"

"He? who?" asked the nun.

"Oh, no one — no one."

"The poor creature is deranged, I fear," murmured the nun to herself.

"The church! the church!" repeated the stranger, so wildly as in some degree to justify this suspicion."

"Come, my sister, let me lead you to it."

"Yes, yes, I am pursued, look you. Quick! the church!"

"Oh, the walls of St. Denis are strong!" said the nun,

with a compassionate smile. "Believe me, after such a journey as you have described, you had much better go and rest in a good bed than bruise your knees on the stones of our chapel."

"No, no! I wish to pray; I wish to pray that God will rescue me from my pursuers!" cried the young woman, hurriedly entering the church by the door which the nun pointed out, and shutting the door behind her.

The nun, curious as all nuns are, hastened round to the principal entrance, and, advancing softly, saw the unknown praying and sobbing before the altar, her face bowed to the ground.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

PARISIANS.

THE nuns had informed the stranger correctly when they told her that the chapter of the convent was assembled in conclave. Madame Louise of France presided at the meeting, her first exercise of supreme authority, and assisted in their deliberation as to the best means of giving the daughter of the Cæsars a reception worthy of her august character and station.

The funds of the convent were rather low. The late abbess, on resigning her functions, had carried away with her a large portion of the lace, which was her private property, as well as the reliquaries and ostenoisirs, which it was the practice of superiors, who were all taken from the highest families, to lend to their convents, on devoting themselves to the service of God from the most worldly motives.

Madame Louise, on learning the intended visit of the dauphiness, had sent an express to Versailles, and the same night a wagon had arrived loaded with hangings, lace, and ornaments, to the value of six hundred thousand francs.

Consequently, when the tidings were spread of the royal splendour which was to be exhibited at the reception of the dauphiness, all the ardent curiosity of the Parisians was redoubled, — those same Parisians whom Mercier describes as provoking only a smile when seen in private life, but when assembled in masses arousing reflections more calculated to make us weep and tremble.

Therefore, from earliest dawn, the citizens of the capital, having learned from public report the route which the dauphiness was to take, began to issue from their dens, and, at first in parties of ten or twenty, then in hundreds, and finally in thousands, poured out towards St. Denis.

The French and Swiss guards, and the regiments stationed at St. Denis, were under arms, and formed a line on each side of the road to keep back the waves of the living tide which rolled on towards the gates of the cathedral, and mounted even to the sculptured projections of the building. A sea of heads appeared everywhere, children's peeping from above the porches of doors, men's and women's thronging the windows. Besides these, thousands of curious spectators, who had arrived too late to secure places, or who, like Gilbert, preferred their liberty to the constraint and inconvenience of being shut up during the whole day in one spot, swarmed like ants on every side, climbing the trees which bordered the road from St. Denis to Muette, or dispersed here and there waiting for the procession.

The *cortège*, although still possessing a numerous train of sumptuous equipages, and troops of domestics in splendid liveries, had considerably diminished after leaving Compiègne; for, except for the great lords, it was found impossible to keep pace with the king, who doubled and tripled the usual stages, by means of relays posted on the road.

Those of lesser note had therefore remained at Compiègne, or had taken post-horses and returned to Paris to give their stud a breathing interval. But after a day's repose at their own domiciles, masters and domestics now thronged towards St. Denis, both to witness the preparations and to get another glimpse of the dauphiness, whom they had already only partially seen. And then, besides the court carriages, were there not those of the parliament, the financiers, the rich merchants, the ladies of fashion and those of the opera? Were there not, in addition, hired horses and carriages, as well as the *caravans*, which

rolled towards St. Denis, crammed with the good citizens of Paris, both male and female, who managed to arrive by this means somewhat later than they could have accomplished the distance on foot? It may easily be imagined, therefore, what a formidable army directed its march toward St. Denis on the morning of the day when the gazettes and placards announced that the dauphiness was to arrive, forming into a dense mass before the Convent of the Carmelites; and when no more room could be obtained within the privileged enclosure, stretching away in long lines on the roads by which the dauphiness and her suite were to arrive and depart.

Now, let any one picture to himself in this crowd, which was the terror even of the Parisian, Gilbert, insignificant in appearance, alone, undecided, ignorant of the localities, and too proud even to ask a question; for since he was in Paris he had determined to pass for a Parisian, — he who had never seen a hundred people assembled together in his life.

At first he saw pedestrians thinly scattered along the road; at La Chapelle they began to increase, and at St. Denis they seemed to rise out of the ground, and presented much the appearance of an immense field bristling with ears of corn. For a long time past Gilbert had seen nothing, lost as he was in the crowd; he could not look over the heads of those around him, and, swept along in the throng, he blindly followed where the concourse of spectators led him.

At last he saw some children perched on a tree, and longed to imitate their example, but he dared not take off his coat. He made his way, however, to the foot of the tree, just as one of those unfortunates, who, like himself, were deprived of all view of the horizon, and who staggered onwards, trampling others and being trampled on themselves, was struck by the bright idea of questioning their lucky neighbours perched in safety on the branches, and learned from one of them that there was a large space

vacant between the convent and the guards. Gilbert, emboldened by this intelligence, ventured in his turn to ask whether the carriages were yet in sight.

They had not yet appeared; but on the road, about a quarter of a league beyond St. Denis, a great cloud of dust was plainly visible. This was what Gilbert wished to know; the carriages not being in sight, it was now his business to ascertain precisely by what route they would approach; but nevertheless he held on his way, traversing the crowd in perfect silence, — a mode of procedure which in Paris leads irresistibly to the conclusion that the person practising it is either an Englishman or deaf and dumb.

Scarcely had Gilbert extricated himself from the multitude, when he perceived, seated behind a ditch, the family of a humble tradesman at breakfast.

There was a blue-eyed daughter, tall and fair, modest and timid.

There was the mother, a fat, laughing little woman, with white teeth and rosy cheeks.

There was an aunt, tall, bony, dry, and harsh.

There was the father, half-buried in an immense camlet coat, which was usually brought out of his chest only on Sundays, but which he ventured to put on on so grand an occasion as the present, and of which he took more care than he did of his wife and daughter, being certain that the latter could take care of themselves.

There was the servant-maid, who did nothing but laugh. She carried an enormous basket containing everything necessary for breakfast, and even under its weight the stout lass had never ceased laughing and singing, encouraged as she was by her master, who took the burden when she was fatigued.

In those days a domestic was one of the family, and occupied a position in it very analogous to that of the house-dog, beaten sometimes, excluded never.

Gilbert contemplated by stealth this group which was so new to him. Shut up at Taverney from his birth, he had

hitherto seen only the lord and the lackey; the citizen was altogether a novelty to him.

He saw these honest people employ in their domestic economy a system of philosophy which, although not drawn from the teachings of Plato and Socrates, was modelled much after that of Bias, a little extended.

They had brought with them as much food as they possibly could, and were determined to make the most of it.

The father was carving one of those appetising pieces of roast veal so much in vogue with the Parisian tradesmen. Nicely browned, dainty, and tempting, it reposed amidst a bed of carrots, onions, and bacon, in the dish in which the day before it had been baked, carefully placed there by the good housekeeper. The maid had then carried it to the baker, who, whilst baking his loaves, had given it an asylum in his oven along with a score of such dishes destined to assist the enjoyments of the following day.

Gilbert chose out a place for himself at the foot of a neighbouring elm, and dusted it carefully with his checked pocket-handkerchief; he then took off his hat, spread his handkerchief on the ground, and seated himself. He paid no attention to his neighbours, which they remarking, naturally directed a good deal of their own to him.

“That is a careful young man,” said the mother.

The daughter blushed. She always did so when a young man was mentioned before her, — a trait in her character which gave the highest gratification to her parents.

The father turned. “And a handsome lad, too,” said he.

The daughter blushed still more deeply than before.

“He looks tired,” said the servant-maid; “and yet he has not been carrying anything.”

“Rather say lazy,” said the aunt.

“Monsieur,” said the mother, addressing Gilbert, with that familiarity which is found nowhere but among the Parisians, “are the carriages still far off?”

Gilbert turned, and seeing that these words were addressed to him, rose and bowed.

"A most polite young man," said the mother.

This remark added a still deeper dye to the daughter's cheeks.

"I do not know, madame," answered Gilbert; "I only heard that a cloud of dust was seen about a quarter of a league off."

"Draw nearer, monsieur," said the honest tradesman; "and if you have not breakfasted—" and he pointed to the excellent repast which was spread on the grass.

Gilbert approached the group. He had not breakfasted, and the seducing odour of the viands tempted him strongly; but he jingled his twenty-five sous in his pocket, and reflecting that for the third of this sum he could purchase a breakfast almost as good as that which was offered to him, he would not accept any favour from people whom he saw for the first time.

"Thank you, monsieur," said he, "a thousand thanks; but I have already breakfasted."

"Ah!" said the good woman, "I see that you are a prudent young man. But from where you are seated you will see nothing."

"Why," replied Gilbert, smiling, "in that case you will not see anything yourselves, as you are in the same position as myself."

"Oh, it is a very different matter with us! We have a nephew a sergeant in the French guards."

The young girl looked like a peony.

"His post this morning will be before Le Paon Bleu."

"If I am not taking too great a liberty," said Gilbert, "may I ask where Le Paon Bleu is?"

"Just opposite the Carmelite Convent," replied the mother. "He has promised to keep places for us behind his detachment; he will then give us his bench, and we shall see at our ease all the company get out of their carriages."

It was now Gilbert's turn to redden; he had refused to eat with the good people, but he longed to be of their party.

Nevertheless, his philosophy, or rather his pride, whispered: "It is very well for women to require some one to assist them, but I, a man, have arms and shoulders of my own."

"All those who do not get placed like us," continued the mother, as if guessing his thoughts, "will only see empty carriages, — no great sight, in truth, for empty carriages can be seen everywhere, and certainly not worth the trouble of coming as far as St. Denis for."

"But, madame," said Gilbert, "it seems to me that many besides yourself will endeavour to secure the place you speak of."

"Yes, but every one has not a nephew in the guards to assist them."

"Ah! true!" murmured Gilbert.

As he said this, his face wore an expression of disappointment which did not escape Parisian penetration.

"But," said the husband, well skilled in divining the wishes of his wife, "this gentleman can accompany us if he pleases."

"Oh, monsieur, I fear I should be troublesome," replied Gilbert.

"Bah! not at all," said the good woman; "on the contrary, you will assist us in reaching our places. We have only one man now to depend on, and then we should have two."

No other argument could have had so much weight in determining Gilbert. The idea that he could be useful, and by so doing pay for the favour which was offered him, put him quite at his ease and relieved every scruple.

He accepted the offer.

"We shall see to whom he will offer his arm," said the aunt.

This assistance was indeed a real God-send to Gilbert. How, without it, could he have passed through a barrier of thirty thousand persons, each more favoured than himself by rank, wealth, or strength, and, above all, by the

practice they had acquired in obtaining places at *fêtes*, where every one seizes the best he can procure?

Had our philosopher been less of a theoretical and more of a practical man, the present occasion would have furnished him with an admirable opportunity for studying the dynamics of society.

The carriage with four horses burst like a cannon-ball through the mass; all fell back on each side before its running footman, with his plumed hat, his gaily striped jacket, and his thick stick, who rushed on in advance, frequently preceded by two formidable coach-dogs.

The carriage with two horses advanced more slowly, and whispered a sort of pass-word in the ear of a guardsman, after which it proceeded to take its place in the *cortège* before the convent.

Single horsemen, although overlooking the crowd from their elevated position, were forced to advance at a foot-pace, and only gained a good position after a thousand jostlings, interruptions, and oaths.

Lastly, the poor pedestrian, trodden, trampled on, and tossed about, was driven forward like the foam of the wave by a thousand waves rolling on behind, — sometimes raising himself on tiptoe to see over the heads of his neighbours; sometimes wrestling like Antæus, to fall like him to his mother earth; seeking his way through the multitude, and when he had found it, dragging after him his family, — almost always a troop of women, — whom the Parisian alone ventures to attempt conducting through such scenes.

Lowest of all, or rather, superior to all, in such circumstances, was the man of the very dregs of the people. With unshaven beard and ragged cap, his arms naked to the elbow, and his garments held together by some fragment of a cord, indefatigably working with elbows, with shoulders, and with feet, and ever and anon uttering a savage and sardonic laugh, he made his way among the crowd as easily as Gulliver amidst the *Liliputians*.

Gilbert, who was neither a great lord with a carriage-and-four, nor a member of parliament with two, nor a soldier on horseback, nor a Parisian, nor a man of the people, must have infallibly been trampled under foot by the throng, had he not been under the protection of the tradesman. Backed by him he felt powerful, and boldly offered his arm to the mother of the family.

“Impertinent fellow!” said the aunt.

They set out; the father gave his sister and his daughter each an arm, and the maid-servant followed behind with the huge basket.

“Gentlemen, may I trouble you?” said the good woman, with her ready laugh. “Gentlemen, if you please, a little room. Gentlemen, be good enough—”

And every one fell back and yielded a passage to her and Gilbert, while in their wake glided the rest of the party.

Foot by foot, step by step, they managed to advance five hundred paces, and then found themselves close to that formidable line of French guards on which the tradesman and his family rested all their hopes. The daughter had by this time regained her natural colour. Once there, the citizen mounted on Gilbert’s shoulders to look over the soldiers’ heads, and perceived at twenty yards’ distance from him his wife’s nephew twisting his moustaches. The good man made such vehement gestures with his hat that at last his nephew’s attention was attracted to him; he came forward, asked his comrades to make way a little, and obtained a slight opening in their ranks.

Through this chink slipped Gilbert and the good woman, then the citizen himself, the sister and daughter, and after them the stout lass with the basket. Their troublesome journey was over, and mutual thanks were exchanged between Gilbert and the head of the family. The mother endeavoured to detain him by their side; the aunt said he had better go; and they separated, not to meet again.

In the open space in which Gilbert now found himself,

none but privileged persons were admitted, and he therefore easily reached the trunk of a large linden-tree, mounted upon a stone near it, and, supporting himself by a low branch, waited patiently.

About half an hour after he had thus installed himself, the cannon roared, the rattling of the drums was heard, and the great bell of the cathedral sent forth its first majestic peal.

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE KING'S CARRIAGES.

A DULL, heavy sound was heard in the distance, which became stronger and deeper as it advanced. As Gilbert listened, he felt every nerve in his body vibrate painfully.

The people were shouting, "God save the king!" It was the fashion then.

Onward came a cloud of prancing horses covered with housings of gold and purple; these were the musketeers, the gendarmes, and Swiss horse guards. Then followed a massive carriage magnificently decorated.

Gilbert perceived in it a blue ribbon and a majestic head not uncovered; he saw the cold, penetrating light of the royal look, before which every form bent and every head was uncovered. Fascinated, motionless, breathless, he forgot to take off his hat.

A violent blow roused him from his trance; his hat rolled on the ground.

He sprang forward, lifted it up, and looking round, saw the tradesman's nephew looking at him with that truculent smile which is peculiar to the soldier.

"Well," said he, "so you don't take off your hat to the king?"

Gilbert turned pale, and looked at his hat covered with dust.

"It is the first time I ever saw the king," said he, "and I forgot to salute him, it is true. But I did not know—"

"You did not know?" said the soldier, frowning.

Gilbert feared that he should be driven from the spot where he was so well placed for seeing Andrée, and love conquered pride.

“Pardon me,” said he, “I am from the country.”

“And you have come to Paris to be educated, my little man?”

“Yes, monsieur,” replied Gilbert, swallowing his rage.

“Well, since you are seeking instruction,” said the sergeant, arresting Gilbert’s hand as he was just going to put his hat on his head, “learn this; you must take off your hat to the dauphiness as well as to the king, and to the princes as well as to the dauphiness,—in short, you must take it off to all the carriages on which you see the *fleur-de-lis*. Do you know the *fleur-de-lis*, my little fellow, or must I show you what it is?”

“Quite unnecessary, monsieur; I know it.”

“It is well you know even that much,” grumbled the sergeant.

The royal carriages continued to file past. As each reached the door of the convent, it stopped to permit its occupants to alight. This operation caused every five minutes a general halt along the whole line.

At one of these halts Gilbert felt as if a fiery sword had pierced his heart; he became giddy, everything swam before his eyes, and he trembled so violently that he was forced to grasp his branch more firmly, to prevent himself from falling.

About ten paces from him, in one of the carriages with the *fleur-de-lis*, to which the sergeant had desired him to take off his hat, he had just perceived Andrée. Dressed in white, and dazzling with beauty, she seemed to his excited eyes some angelic being from a higher sphere.

He uttered a stifled cry; but immediately afterwards, conquering his agitation, he commanded his heart to be still and his gaze steady; and so great was his self-control that he succeeded.

Andrée, on her side, wishing to know why the proces-

sion had stopped, leaned forward out of the carriage, and directing her clear and limpid gaze around, she perceived Gilbert, and at once recognised him. Gilbert feared that on seeing him she would be surprised, and would point him out to her father.

He was not mistaken. With an air of astonishment she turned towards the Baron de Taverney, who, decorated with his red ribbon, sat with great dignity beside her, and directed his attention to Gilbert.

“Gilbert?” cried the baron, starting, “Gilbert here? And who, pray, will take care of Mahon at Taverney?”

The young man heard these words distinctly, and with the most studied respect he bowed to Andrée and the baron. It required all his strength to accomplish this feat.

“It is really he!” continued the baron, on perceiving our philosopher. “It is the little rascal himself!”

The idea of Gilbert being in Paris was one so far removed from his thoughts that at first he would not believe his daughter's assertions, and could hardly credit even his own eyes. As for Andrée, whom Gilbert examined closely, after the first slight shade of surprise had passed away, her countenance resumed an expression of most perfect calm.

The baron leaned out of the carriage window and signed to Gilbert to approach; but as he attempted to obey, the sergeant stopped him.

“You see that I am called,” said he.

“By whom?” demanded the sergeant.

“The gentleman in that carriage.”

The sergeant's eye followed the direction of Gilbert's finger, and rested on the Baron de Taverney's carriage.

“Pray allow him to come this way, sergeant,” said the baron. “I wish to speak to the lad — two words only.”

“Four, monsieur, four, if you like,” replied the soldier. “You have plenty of time; they are now reading an address at the gate, and I dare say it will occupy half an hour. Pass through, young man.”

"Come hither, you rascal!" said the baron to Gilbert, who affected to walk at his usual pace, "and tell me by what accident it happens you are here when you ought to be at Taverney!"

Gilbert saluted Andrée and the baron a second time and replied:—

"It was no accident which brought me to Paris, monsieur; I came hither of my own free will."

"Your free will, you scoundrel? Do you talk of your will to me?"

"Why not? Every free man has the right to possess it."

"Oh, ho! Free man! You imagine yourself free, do you, you little wretch?"

"Certainly I am; I have never sold my freedom to any one."

"Upon my word, this is an amusing sort of a scoundrel!" exclaimed the baron, confounded at the coolness with which Gilbert spoke. "Your free will led you to Paris! And how did you travel, pray? What assistance had you, may I ask?"

"I came on foot."

"On foot!" said Andrée, with a sort of pity in her tone.

"And pray what do you intend to do in Paris?" inquired the baron.

"To get educated first, then make my fortune."

"Educated?"

"Yes; I am certain of being educated."

"Make your fortune?"

"I hope to make it."

"And in the meantime what do you do? Beg?"

"Beg!" exclaimed Gilbert, with lofty scorn.

"You steal, then?"

"Monsieur," said Gilbert, with a look so proud and fierce that it fixed Andrée's attention on him for a moment, "monsieur, did I ever steal from you?"

"What can your idle hands do but steal?"

"What those of a man of genius do,—a man whom I wish to imitate, were it only in his perseverance," replied Gilbert. "They copy music."

Andrée turned towards him. "Copy music?" said she.

"Yes, mademoiselle."

"You know music, then?" inquired she, with the same contemptuous tone in which she would have said, "It is false."

"I know my notes, and that is enough for a copyist."

"And how the devil did you learn your notes, you rascal?" cried the baron.

"Yes, how?" added Andrée, smiling.

"I love music, monsieur, passionately, and when Mademoiselle Andréé played on the harpsichord every day, I hid myself that I might listen."

"Good-for-nothing fellow!"

"At first I remembered the airs; then, as they were written in a music-book, by degrees I learned to read the notes from the book."

"From my music-book?" exclaimed Andrée, with the utmost indignation; "did you dare to touch my music-book?"

"No, mademoiselle, I did not permit myself to do so; but as it remained open on the harpsichord, sometimes in one place, sometimes in another, I endeavoured to read in it, but without touching it. My eyes would not soil the pages."

"You will see," cried the baron, "that the fellow will assert next that he plays on the piano like Haydn!"

"I should probably have been able by this time to play," said Gilbert, "had I dared to place my fingers on the keys."

Andrée again glanced at that face which was animated by a sentiment only to be compared to the fanaticism of a martyr eager for the stake; but the baron, who did not possess his daughter's clear and comprehensive intellect,

groaned aloud; he thought that he could no longer bear the weight of his sufferings.

Just then a hand rested on his shoulder; he turned and saw Philip, who, having given his horse to a soldier of his regiment to hold, returned, smiling, towards him.

“Come, let me hear what has happened, my poor Gilbert,” said he, “and why you have come to Paris.”

His frank and cordial tone touched the young man’s heart.

“Oh, monsieur,” replied he, with a sigh, his stern stoicism melting at once, “what would I have done at Taverney, I ask you? I must have died of despair, ignorance, and hunger.”

Philip started; his generous heart was struck, as Andrée’s had been, by the misery and destitution in which Gilbert had been left.

“And you think, my poor fellow, to succeed in Paris without money, protectors, or resources?”

“I trust so, monsieur. A man who is willing to work rarely dies of hunger where there are other men who wish to do nothing.”

Philip was struck by this reply; until then he had always looked on Gilbert as a commonplace domestic.

“But have you any means of buying food?” said he.

“I can earn my daily bread, Monsieur Philip. That is sufficient for one who has never had any cause for self-reproach, but that of having eaten bread not gained by his toil.”

“I hope you do not say so with reference to that which you received at Taverney, my poor lad. Your father and mother were faithful servants, and you were always willing to make yourself useful.”

“I only did my duty, monsieur.”

“Listen to me, Gilbert. You are aware that I always liked you. I have always looked upon you in a more favourable light than others; whether justly or the reverse, the future will show. What others called haughty pride,

I termed delicacy; where others saw rudeness and ill-breeding, I perceived only honest bluntness."

"Ah, chevalier!" said Gilbert, breathing more freely.

"I really wish you well, Gilbert."

"Thank you, monsieur."

"Young like you, and like you also in an unhappy position, I was perhaps on that account more disposed to feel for and pity you. Fortune has blessed me with abundance; let me assist you until fortune smiles on you in your turn."

"Thanks, monsieur, many thanks."

"What do you think of doing? You are too proud to accept of a situation as servant."

Gilbert shook his head with a scornful smile. "I wish to study," said he.

"But in order to study you must have masters, and to pay them you must have money."

"I can earn money, monsieur."

"Earn money? How much can you earn?"

"Twenty-five sous a day, and in a short time perhaps thirty and even forty sous."

"But that is barely enough for food."

Gilbert smiled.

"Perhaps," continued Philip, "I am not taking the right way of offering you my services."

"Your services to me, Monsieur Philip!"

"Yes, my services. Are you ashamed to accept them?"

Gilbert made no answer.

"Men are sent on earth to aid one another," continued Maison-Rouge. "Are we not all brethren?"

Gilbert raised his head and fixed his intelligent gaze on the chevalier's noble countenance.

"Does this language surprise you?" said he.

"No, monsieur," said Gilbert, "it is the language of philosophy; but it is not usual to hear such from persons of your rank."

"Yet it is the language of the times. The dauphin him-

self shares in these sentiments. Come, do not be proud with me," continued Philip. "What I lend you, you can repay me one day or other. Who knows but you may yet be a Colbert or a Vauban?"

"Or a Tronchin," said Gilbert.

"Yes, or a Tronchin. Here is my purse; let me share its contents with you."

"Thank you, monsieur," said the indomitable Gilbert, moved in spite of himself by Philip's genial kindness; "but I do not want anything. Only—only—believe me, I am as grateful to you as if I had accepted your offer."

And, bowing, he disappeared in the crowd, leaving the young captain lost in astonishment. The latter waited a few minutes, as if he could not believe his eyes or ears, but finding that Gilbert did not return, he mounted his horse and returned to his post.

CHAPTER L.

THE DEMONIAC.

THE noise of the carriages, the prolonged and merry peal of the bells, the joyful beating of the drums, all the pomp and ceremony of the day,—a faint reflection of that world now lost to her forever,—faded from Madame Louise's mind like an idle wave which had rolled up to the walls of her cell and then retreated.

When the king had departed, after having once more endeavoured, but in vain, to win his daughter back to the world by a mixture of paternal entreaty and royal command, and when the dauphiness, who had been at the first glance struck by the real greatness of soul displayed by her august aunt, had also disappeared with her gay throng of courtiers,—the superior of the Carmelites gave orders that the hangings should be taken down, the flowers removed, and the lace with which the convent had been decorated once more placed in its usual repository.

Of all the sisterhood of the Carmelites she alone was unmoved when the massive gates of the convent, which had for a moment opened to the world, closed heavily again on their solitude.

Then she summoned the sister who acted as treasurer of the convent.

“During these two noisy and bustling days,” asked she, “have the poor received their usual alms?”

“Yes, madame.”

“Have the sick been visited?”

“Yes, madame.”

"Did the soldiers receive some refreshment before they departed?"

"They received the wine and the bread which you ordered, madame."

"Then no one is ill or sick in the convent?"

"No one, madame."

The princess approached a window and softly inhaled the cool and perfumed breeze which was wafted towards her on the humid wings of evening. The treasurer waited respectfully until her august superior should give her an order or dismiss her. Madame Louise commenced to pluck off the leaves of the roses and jessamine which twined around the windows and climbed up the walls of the building. Heaven alone knows what were the thoughts of the poor royal recluse at that moment.

Suddenly the door of a detached building in the court-yard, close at hand, was shaken by the violent kick of a horse. Madame Louise started.

"What nobleman of the court has remained after the rest at St. Denis?" asked she.

"His Eminence the Cardinal de Rohan, madame."

"Are his horses here, too?"

"No, madame; they are at the chapter-house of the abbey, where he is to pass the night."

"What noise was that, then?"

"Madame, it was caused by the foreign woman's horse."

"What woman?" asked Madame Louise, endeavoring to recollect.

"The Italian who came yesterday to request the protection of your Royal Highness."

"Ah! true, I remember now. Where is she?"

"In her chamber, or in the church."

"How has she conducted herself since she came?"

"Since yesterday she has refused all nourishment except dry bread, and has spent the entire night praying in the chapel."

"Some great criminal, doubtless," said the superior, frowning.

"I do not know, madame; she has spoken to no one since she arrived.

"What sort of a woman is she?"

"Extremely handsome, and with an expression at once gentle and haughty."

"This morning, during the ceremony, where was she?"

"In her chamber, close to the window, where I saw her, half hidden by the curtain, watching with anxious eyes every person who entered, as if in each she feared an enemy."

"She is some poor erring creature of the world in which I once lived and reigned. Admit her."

The nun made a movement to retire.

"Ah! By the by, what is her name?" asked the princess.

"Lorenza Feliciani."

"I know no one of that name," said Madame Louise, reflecting. "No matter; introduce her."

The superior seated herself in her chair of state, which was of carved oak, made in the reign of Henry II., and had been used by the last nine abbesses of the Carmelites. It was a formidable judgment-seat, before which had trembled many a poor novice caught on the slippery path between spiritual and temporal things.

A moment afterwards the nun entered, leading in the strange lady, who was covered from head to foot with the long veil we have before mentioned.

Madame Louise possessed the piercing eye peculiar to her family, and as Lorenza Feliciani appeared before her, she fastened a stern and searching glance on her. But she saw in the young woman's demeanour so much humility, grace, and beauty, and in the large eyes, filled with tears, which she turned on her, such an innocent and supplicating expression, that her feeling of harshness gave place immediately to one of compassion and kindness.

"Draw near, madame," said the princess.

The stranger advanced hesitatingly, and was about to kneel, when the princess prevented her.

"Is not your name, madame," said she, "Lorenza Feliciani?"

"Yes, madame."

"And you wish to confide a secret to me?"

"Oh! I burn to do so!"

"But why had you not recourse to the tribunal of penance? I have only power to console; a priest can not only console, but pardon."

"I require only consolation, madame," replied Lorenza; "and besides, it is to a woman alone that I dare relate what I have to tell you."

"Then it is a strange story which you are about to narrate?"

"Yes, strange indeed. But hear me patiently, madame; it is to you alone, I repeat, that I dare confide it, both because you are a woman, and because you are all-powerful to protect me."

"Protect you? Are you pursued, then? Are you in danger?"

"Oh, yes, madame, yes!" cried the stranger, with wild alarm.

"But reflect, madame," said the princess, "that this is a convent, and not a fortress; that those worldly thoughts which agitate the breasts of men penetrate not here; that strife and combat are here extinguished; that this is not a house of justice, of force, or repression, but simply the house of God."

"Oh! that is what I seek!" said Lorenza. "Yes, I seek the house of God, for there alone can I find shelter and repose."

"But God admits not of revenge. How, then, do you ask his servant to avenge you? Address yourself to the magistrates."

"They can do nothing against him whom I dread."

"Who is he, then?" asked the abbess, with a mysterious and involuntary dread.

Lorenza approached close to the princess in a nervous and excited manner.

"Who is he, madame?" said she. "He is, I firmly believe, one of those demons who war against man, and whom Satan, their prince, has gifted with superhuman power."

"How? what mean you?" exclaimed the princess, recoiling as if to satisfy herself that she was not addressing a lunatic.

"And I — how unhappy I am!" continued Lorenza, writhing her snow-white and rounded arms, which seemed modelled from those of some antique statue, "I crossed the path of that man, and now, I am — I am —"

"What? What?"

Lorenza again approached the princess, and, as if terrified herself at what she was about to utter, she whispered hoarsely, "I am possessed by the demon!"

"Possessed?" cried the princess. "Take care, madame! Are you sure you are in your senses? Are you not —"

"Mad, you would say; no, no, I am not mad, but I may become so if you abandon me."

"But, madame," said the princess, recovering her firmness, "permit me to observe that you seem to me in all respects one of the favoured of Heaven; you are rich and beautiful, you express yourself rationally, and I see in your countenance nothing betokening that terrible and mysterious disease called possession."

"Madame, it is in my life, it is in the adventures which have befallen me, that the baleful secret lies which I would willingly conceal even from myself."

"Explain yourself calmly. Am I the first to whom you have disclosed your sufferings? Your parents, your friends —"

"My parents!" exclaimed the young woman, clasping her hands with agony, "my poor parents! Shall I never see you again? Friends?" added she, bitterly, "alas, madame, have I any friends?"

"Come, let us proceed regularly, my poor child," said Madame Louise, endeavouring to restore order to the

stranger's incoherent words; "tell me all. Who are your parents? How came you to abandon them?"

"Madame, I am a native of Rome, and I lived in Rome with them. My father belongs to the ancient nobility, but, like all our patricians, he is poor. I have also a mother, and a brother older than myself. In France, I believe, when a family such as mine has a son and daughter, the portion of the daughter is sacrificed to purchase the son's sword; with us the daughter is sacrificed to put the son forward in the Church. Consequently I received no education, as all our patrimony was required to pay for my brother's education, that, as my poor brother innocently said, he might one day be a cardinal; and for this purpose my parents submitted to every privation, and decided on making me take the veil in the Carmelite Convent at Subiaco."

"And you—what did you say?"

"Nothing, madame. From childhood I had been taught to look forward to such an event as inevitable. Besides, I was not consulted; my parents commanded, I had only to obey."

"But yet—"

"Oh! madame, we Roman girls are helpless instruments in the hands of others. Almost all my young friends who had brothers had paid this debt for the advancement of their families. I had, therefore, no reason to complain; all that was done was in the ordinary course of things. My mother merely caressed me a little more than usual as the time for my leaving her approached. At last the day for the commencement of my novitiate arrived; my father prepared his five hundred crowns, my dowry for the convent, and we set out for Subiaco. It is only about nine leagues from Rome to Subiaco, but the roads are bad, and our journey was slow and fatiguing. Nevertheless, it pleased me. I welcomed it as a last enjoyment, and whispered adieu to the trees, the shrubs, the rocks, and even to the withered grass which lined the road. How

could I tell if at the convent I should see trees, rocks, or shrubs ? Suddenly, in the midst of my fancies, as we wound along between a wood and a mass of overhanging rock, the carriage stopped. My mother shrieked; my father seized his pistols. My thoughts descended suddenly to earth, for those who had stopped us were bandits."

"My poor child!" said the princess, becoming more and more interested in the narrative.

"Well — shall I confess it, madame? — I was not much terrified, for these men had stopped us to take our money, and this money was the sum destined for my dowry to the convent. Consequently, if there was no dowry, my entrance into the convent would be delayed until my father could collect five hundred crowns more, and I knew well the time and trouble it had taken to amass these. But when the robbers, after having shared the booty, instead of permitting us to continue our journey, turned and seized me, regardless of the tears of my mother and the efforts of my father to defend me, I was struck with a sort of nameless terror, and shrieked aloud. They bound my hands, in spite of my struggles, and held me there whilst they threw the dice to ascertain to whom I should belong. I had abandoned all hope; my mother had fainted away, and my father lay writhing on the earth. At this moment a man mounted on horseback appeared among the robbers; he had spoken in a low voice to one of the sentinels on passing him, and the man had allowed him to proceed, exchanging a sign with him as he did so. He was of the middle height, of commanding features, and with a fixed and resolute glance; he continued to advance calmly at the usual pace of his steed, and when he had arrived opposite me he stopped. The bandit who was holding me bound, turned suddenly at the first blast which the stranger gave on a little whistle fixed to the end of his whip, and allowed me to slip from his hands. 'Come hither,' said the unknown; and as the man appeared to hesitate, he

leaned forward and whispered in his ear the single word 'Mac.' 'Benac,' replied the bandit; and then, like a lion subdued and crouching under the lash, he proceeded to untie my hands, as well as those of my father and mother. Then, as the money had been already divided, each man of the troop came forward in his turn to lay his share on a stone. Not a crown of the entire sum was wanting. 'Now, go!' said he to the banditti, and instantly every man disappeared among the surrounding woods.

"Lorenza Feliciani," said the stranger then, addressing me and fixing on me a look which had more than human power in it, 'proceed on your way; you are free!' My father and mother thanked this stranger, who knew me, but whom we did not know, and entered the carriage again. I accompanied them with a sort of regret; for some strange, irresistible power seemed to attract me to the man who had thus saved me. He remained immovable in the same spot, as if to protect our retreat, and as long as I could distinguish his form my eyes were fixed on him; and it was only when he was lost to view that the oppressive feeling which weighed upon my bosom was removed."

"But who was this extraordinary man?" asked the princess, interested by the simplicity of the narrative.

"Deign to hear me farther, madame," said Lorenza. "Alas! all is not yet told."

"I listen," said Madame Louise.

The young woman proceeded:—

"Two hours afterwards we reached Subiaco. During the rest of our journey we never ceased conversing about this mysterious protector, who had come so suddenly, like an angelic messenger, to our assistance, and whose power seemed so inexplicable and unbounded. My father, less credulous than I, thought that he must be the captain of one of the numerous troops of robbers which infest the neighbourhood of Rome; but in this I could not agree, although I dared not openly oppose my opinion to my

father's, which was the result of years and experience. My instinctive feeling of gratitude towards this man who had so wonderfully saved me revolted against the idea that he was a bandit; and every evening, in my devotions, I offered up a prayer to the Virgin for my unknown protector.

"The same day I entered the convent. I felt sadder, but also more resigned. An Italian, and consequently superstitious, I believed that God, by delivering me from the bandits, had wished to preserve me pure and unsullied for His service. I therefore gave myself up with ardour to the fulfilment of every duty of religion; and my father, learning this, drew up a petition to the Sovereign Pontiff to entreat him to shorten the period of my novitiate. I signed this document, which was expressed in terms so warm and earnest that his Holiness, seeing in it only the aspirations of a soul disgusted with the world, granted me a dispensation which fixed the term of my novitiate at a month instead of a year.

"This news, when announced to me, inspired me with neither joy nor grief. I was like one already dead to the world. For fifteen days I was kept closely confined, lest any worldly desires might arise in my breast. At the end of that time I was allowed to descend with the other sisters to the chapel. I entered and took my place behind the curtain which separated, or affected to separate, the nuns from the congregation. Looking through one of the openings, which seemed to me, as it were, a loophole from which I could obtain a last glance at the world I was leaving, I saw a man standing up alone in the middle of the kneeling crowd. He seemed to devour me with his eyes, and I felt again that strange sensation of uneasiness which I had before experienced, and which seemed to draw me, as it were, away from myself, as I had seen my brother draw a needle after the loadstone, even through a leaf of paper or a piece of wood.

"Overcome, subdued, without force to struggle against

my feelings, I leaned forward, and with clasped hands I murmured, 'Thanks, thanks!' The nuns looked at me with surprise; they could not comprehend my words or gestures, and, following my glance, they rose on their seats, and gazed down into the body of the church. I also gazed, trembling. The stranger had disappeared. They questioned me, but I only turned pale and red by turns, and stammered out some incoherent words. From that moment, madame," cried Lorenza, in a despairing voice, "the demon possessed me!"

"Nevertheless," replied the princess, smiling, "I see nothing supernatural in all that you have related. Calm yourself, my sister, and proceed."

"Ah, madame! it is because you cannot understand what I felt. Heart, soul, mind,—the demon possessed all!"

"My sister, I fear greatly that this demon was only love," said Madame Louise.

"Oh, love could not have made me suffer thus! Love would not so have oppressed my heart; it would not have shaken my frame as the storm shakes a slender reed! Love would not have whispered in my ear the sinful thought which haunted me at that moment."

"What thought, my child?"

"Ought not I to have disclosed all to my confessor, madame?"

"Doubtless."

"Well, the demon that possessed me whispered me, on the contrary, to keep it secret. I fancied, madame, that I would be accused of such an intrigue with this man as all of us have had, before taking the veil, with some regretted lover."

"An evil thought, indeed; but it is often a very innocent demon which puts such thoughts in the heart of a woman. Proceed."

"On the following day I was summoned to the parlour. I found there one of my neighbours of the Via Frattina at

Rome, — a young married lady, who regretted very much the loss of my society, because every evening we used to meet to talk and sing together. Behind her, close to the door, stood a man wrapped in a cloak, who seemed her servant. He did not turn towards me, but I turned towards him; he did not speak, yet I knew him. He was my unknown protector. The same thrilling sensation I had already experienced shot through my frame; I felt my whole being subdued by the power of this man. Had it not been for the bars which held me captive, I should certainly have followed him. Although enveloped closely in his mantle, rays of light seemed to shoot from him which dazzled me; profound as was his silence, it had sounds which spoke to me a harmonious language. I made a violent effort to subdue my feelings, and asked my friend who the man was who accompanied her. She did not know him. Her husband, who had purposed accompanying her, had been prevented by some engagement, and had brought this friend of his, a stranger to her, to be her companion.

“My friend was religious, and seeing in a corner of the parlour a Madonna who had the reputation of possessing miraculous powers, she would not depart without offering up a prayer before her. Whilst she was engaged in her devotions, the man entered the room, approached close to me, uncovered his face, and fixed his glowing eyes on mine. I waited for him to speak; my bosom heaved as if in expectation of his words, but he contented himself with putting his arms through the bars which separated us, and extended them above my head. Immediately an inexpressible feeling of delight seized on my whole frame. He smiled; I returned his smile, closing my eyes, which seemed weighed down by an overpowering languor as I did so. Then, as if he had merely wished to assure himself of his power over me, he immediately retired. As he disappeared I recovered by degrees the use of my senses; but I was still under the dominion of this strange hallu-

cination, when my friend, having finished her prayer, rose, and, embracing me, took her leave. When I was undressing at night, I found in my bosom a note containing these words: 'In Rome, the man who loves a nun is punished by death. Will you kill him to whom you owe your life?' From that moment the demon possessed me entirely, for I lied before Heaven, madame, in not confessing that I thought of this man much more than of my salvation."

Lorenza, terrified at what she had disclosed, paused to discover what impression it had produced on the mild and intelligent countenance of the princess.

"Still," replied the princess, firmly, "all this is not possession by the Evil One; it is merely the result of an unhappy passion, and I must again repeat that such thoughts cannot be spoken of here, except to express regret for them."

"Regret? madame," cried Lorenza. "What! you behold me in tears at your feet, beseeching you to rescue me from the power of this fearful man, and yet you doubt my regret? Oh! I feel more than regret, I feel remorse."

"And yet," said Madame Louise, "up to this point—"

"Ah, madame, you have not yet heard all. Wait till I have finished, and then, I beseech you, judge me mercifully. Three days in the week we attended divine service in the chapel. The unknown was always present. I wished to resist him; I pretended that I was ill; I resolved not to go down. Alas for human weakness! When the hour arrived, I descended with the nuns, as it were in despite of my own will. If he were not in the church when I entered, I had some moments of calm; but, as he drew near, I felt him coming. I could have said, 'Now he is a hundred paces off; now he is at the door; now he is in the church,' and that without even looking in the direction by which he came. Then, when he had reached his accustomed place, although my eyes had been fastened on my prayer-book, while I murmured the words before me, they turned involuntarily and rested on him. I could

neither read nor pray; my whole looks, my whole thoughts, my whole being, were engrossed by this man. At first I could not look at him without fear; then I longed to see him; then my thoughts seemed to meet his; and often I saw him as in a dream in the night, and felt him pass beneath my window.

“The state of my mind did not escape the notice of my companions. The abbess was informed of it, and she in turn informed my parents. Three days before I was to pronounce my vows, my father, my mother, and my brother—the only relations I had in the world—entered my cell. They came ostensibly to bid me farewell, but I saw plainly that they had some other motive, and when my mother was left alone with me, she questioned me closely. And here the power of the Evil One may clearly be seen; for instead of telling all, as I ought to have done, I denied everything obstinately.

“On the day when I was to take the veil a strange struggle took place within me. I both dreaded and wished for the moment which was to give me up entirely to the service of God; and I felt that if the demon meditated a last effort to subdue me to his will, it would be at this solemn moment that he would attempt its execution.”

“And had that strange man never written to you since the first letter which you found in your bosom?” asked the princess.

“Never, madame.”

“And at that time you had never spoken to him?”

“Never, except in thought.”

“Nor written to him?”

“Oh, never!”

“Proceed; you were at the day when you were to take the veil.”

“That day, as I have told your Highness, I hoped was to end my tortures, and I was impatient for the ceremony. ‘When I belong to God entirely,’ I thought, ‘He will defend me against the demon who now wrestles with

me for the possession of my soul.' In the mean time the hour arrived. I descended to the church, pale, restless, but yet less agitated than usual. My father, my mother, my brother, my friend from the Via Frattina who had come before to see me, and many other of our friends, were there. The inhabitants of the neighbouring villages also thronged the church, for the report had been spread that I was lovely, and a lovely victim, they say, is most acceptable to the Lord.

"The service began. I would have hastened it by my prayers; for he was not present, and in his absence I felt that I was mistress of myself. Already the priest had raised the crucifix before me, and I was just about to extend my arm towards it, when the trembling which invariably announced the approach of my persecutor seized me. Forced by an irresistible attraction, I turned round, and saw him standing near the pulpit, gazing at me more fixedly than he had ever yet done. In vain I endeavoured to keep my eyes on the priest; service, ceremony, prayers, faded from my sight. I believe I was questioned concerning the rite; I remember I was pulled by the arm to arouse me, but I tottered like some inanimate object trembling on its base. I was shown the scissors, from which a ray of sunlight was reflected back with dazzling brightness, but I did not even wink. Then I felt the cold steel on my neck, and heard its sharp point in my hair.

"From that moment it seemed to me as if all strength left me; my soul rushed from my body to meet his, and I fell motionless on the pavement; yet, strange to say, not like one who had fainted, but like one overcome by sleep. I heard a loud murmur, and almost immediately after became insensible. The ceremony was interrupted with frightful tumult."

The princess clasped her hands with a gesture of compassion.

"Ah, madame, was not that terrible?" said Lorenza; "and is it not easy to see in such an event the intervention of the Enemy of man?"

"Take care, my poor girl," said the princess, in a tone of tenderness and pity; "I think you are too much disposed to attribute to miraculous power that which is simply the result of human weakness. On seeing that man you fainted, that is all. Proceed."

"Oh, madame, do not say so, or, at least, wait till you have heard all before you judge. Had I fainted, should I not have come to myself in ten minutes, or a quarter of an hour, or an hour at most? Should I not have been surrounded by my sister nuns, and have resumed courage and faith on seeing them?"

"Doubtless," said Madame Louise. "Well, was it not so?"

"Madame," said Lorenza, in a low, hurried whisper, "when I was restored to consciousness it was night. I felt a rapid, jolting motion, which fatigued me, and I raised my head, thinking that I was under the vaulted roof of the chapel, or within the curtains of my cell. I saw rocks, trees, clouds; then I felt a warm breath fanning my cheeks. I thought that it was the sick nurse who was endeavouring to restore me, and I made an effort to thank her. Madame, my head was resting on the bosom of a man, —that man my persecutor! I felt myself to ascertain whether I was really alive, or if I was awake. I could not restrain a cry of terror. I was dressed in white, and wore on my head a crown of white roses like a bride, or like a maiden dressed for the tomb."

The princess uttered an exclamation of astonishment. Lorenza hid her face in her hands.

"The next day," continued Lorenza, sobbing, "I made inquiries, and ascertained that it was Wednesday. For three days, therefore, I had remained insensible. I am ignorant of all that happened during that time."

CHAPTER LI.

THE COUNT DE FENIX.

A LONG and painful silence succeeded to this narrative, during which each of the two ladies seemed absorbed in her reflections. The princess was the first to break it.

“And you lent no assistance to this man to carry you off?” said she.

“None, madame.”

“You are ignorant how you left the convent?”

“I am quite ignorant.”

“Yet a convent is kept carefully guarded; there are bars to the windows; the walls are very high; there is a portress who keeps the keys of the gates always at her side. That is especially the case in Italy, where the rules are even more severe than in France.”

“Madame, I can only reply that from the moment of my awaking from my trance until now, I have searched my memory to discover any trace of what must have occurred; but in vain.”

“But did you not reproach him for what he had done?”

“Oh, yes, madame!”

“What was his excuse?”

“That he loved me.”

“And what did you reply to that?”

“That I had a horror of him.”

“Then you did not love him?”

“Oh, no, no!”

“Are you quite certain?”

“Alas, madame, what I felt for that man was singular indeed! When he was present I was no longer myself;

what he willed, I willed; what he commanded, I did; my soul had no power, my mind no will; a look from him subdued and fascinated me. Sometimes he seemed to inspire me with thoughts which were not mine; sometimes he seemed to draw from me ideas so deeply hidden that I had never even guessed that I possessed them. Oh! do you not see, madame, that there was magic in all this?"

"It is certainly strange, if not supernatural," said the princess. "But after you had been carried off, how did you live with that man?"

"He displayed the warmest affection for me, the sincerest attachment."

"He was a vicious man, no doubt?"

"I do not think he was, madame; there was, on the contrary, something lofty and inspired in his manner of speaking."

"Come, come! you loved him; confess it!"

"No, no, madame," said the young woman, with mournful bitterness; "no, I did not love him."

"Then you ought to have left him; you ought to have appealed to the public authorities, and demanded to be restored to your parents."

"Madame, he watched me so closely that I could not fly."

"But why not write, then?"

"Wherever we stopped on the road, the house seemed to belong to him alone, and every one obeyed him. Several times I asked for pen, ink, and paper, but those to whom I applied were doubtless desired by him not to obey me, for they never even answered me."

"And how did you travel?"

"At first in a post-chaise; but at Milan, instead of a carriage we entered a kind of moving house, in which we continued our journey."

"But he must have sometimes left you alone?"

"Yes, but at these times, before leaving me, he ap-

proached me and said, ‘Sleep!’ I slept, and did not awake until his return.”

The princess shook her head incredulously.

“You would have been able to escape,” said she, “had you endeavoured to do so with energy.”

“Alas! madame; and yet it seemed to me as if I did; but perhaps I was fascinated.”

“Yes, fascinated by words of love, and by his caresses.”

“He seldom spoke of love, madame; and except a kiss imprinted on my forehead in the morning and one in the evening, he bestowed no caresses on me.”

“Strange, strange indeed!” murmured the princess; then, as if some suspicion had crossed her mind, she said aloud: “And you are ready to assert again that you do not love him?”

“I do assert it again, madame.”

“And no earthly bond unites you to him?”

“None, madame.”

“Then should he claim you, he would have no right over you?”

“None, madame, none.”

“But,” added the princess, after a moment’s reflection, “how did you escape at last? I do not understand that.”

“Madame, I took advantage of a violent storm which occurred whilst we were near a town called Nancy, I think. He left the part of the carriage in which I was, to go into another compartment of it, to talk to an old man who was with us. Then I leaped on his horse and fled.”

“And why did you prefer remaining in France to returning to Italy?”

“I reflected that I could not return to Rome, since my parents and friends there would certainly imagine I had been the accomplice of that man, and perhaps refuse to receive me. I resolved, therefore, to come to Paris, and to endeavour to remain concealed; or to try and reach some other great city, where no eye—and, above all, his

—could discover me. When I reached Paris, madame, every one was speaking of your retirement into the Convent of the Carmelites; they lauded your piety, your charity towards the wretched, your pity for the afflicted. A ray of hope darted through my soul, and I was struck with the conviction that you would be generous enough to receive me, and powerful enough to protect me."

"You appeal always to my power, my poor child. Is he, then, so powerful?"

"Oh, yes, madame!"

"But who is he, then? Through delicacy I have until now refrained from asking his name; but if I am to defend you, I must know against whom."

"Oh, madame, even on that point I cannot enlighten you. I know neither who he is nor what he is. All that I know is, that a king could not inspire more respect, a deity could not receive greater adoration than he, from those to whom he deigns to reveal himself."

"But how do they address him? What is his name?"

"I have heard him addressed by different names; at present, however, I remember only two of them. One is given him by the old man who, as I told you, travelled with us from Milan; the other he gives himself."

"What does the old man call him?"

"Acharat; is not that a heathenish name, madame?"

"And what is his other name?"

"Joseph Balsamo."

"And what can you tell me of him?"

"That he seems to know all persons, to penetrate into all things; he is cotemporary with all times, has lived in all ages. He speaks—may Heaven pardon such blasphemies!—he speaks of Alexander, Cæsar, and Charlemagne, as if he had known them, yet I am sure they have been dead a very long time. But what is worse, he will talk of Caiaphas, Pilate, and our blessed Saviour, as if he had been present at the crucifixion."

"He is some charlatan, I perceive," said the princess.

"I do not know exactly what that means, madame; but what I do know is, that he is a dangerous, terrible man. All yield to him, all bend before him, all fall prostrate at his word. You think him defenceless, he is armed; you think him alone, and he causes men to rise out of the earth, and that without an effort,—by a gesture, a word, a smile."

"It is well," said the princess. "Whoever he be, take courage, my child, you shall be protected from him."

"By you, madame, by you?"

"Yes, by me; so long as you yourself do not abandon my protection. But cease from this time to believe, and above all cease to endeavour to make me believe, in the superstitious visions which are the offspring of your diseased imagination. The walls of St. Denis will guard you securely against infernal powers, and against powers even more to be feared, those of wicked men. And now, madame, what are your intentions?"

"With these jewels, which belong to me, madame, I wish to pay my dowry to some convent,—to this convent, if possible."

And Lorenza laid on a table precious bracelets, valuable rings, a magnificent diamond, and other jewels, the whole worth about twenty thousand crowns.

"Are those ornaments your own?" asked the princess.

"Yes, madame. He gave them to me, and I devote them to the Church. I have only one wish with regard to his property."

"What is that?"

"That his Arabian horse, Djerid, the instrument of my deliverance, be restored to him if he demand it."

"But with regard to yourself, you will on no account return to him?"

"On no account."

"Then what will you do? Am I to assume that it is your wish to enter this convent and continue in the practice of those duties which were interrupted at Subiaco by the extraordinary circumstances you have related to me?"

"It is my dearest wish, madame; at your feet I supplicate its fulfilment."

"Be tranquil, my child; from this day you shall live with us; and when, by the exemplary conduct which I expect from you, you have shown that you deserve that favour, you shall take the vows, and I answer for it, no one shall carry you away from St. Denis whilst your abbess watches over you."

Lorenza threw herself at the feet of her benefactress, and poured forth expressions of gratitude the most tender and the most sincere; but all at once, rising on one knee, she listened, turned pale, and trembled.

"Oh, heavens! Oh, heavens!" she exclaimed.

"What is the matter?" asked Madame Louise.

"My whole frame trembles. He is coming! He is coming!"

"Who is coming?"

"He who has sworn to destroy my soul."

"That man?"

"Yes, that man; do you not see how my hand trembles? Oh!" continued she, in a tone of anguish, "he approaches! — he is near!"

"You are mistaken."

"No, madame, no! Hold me! He draws me to him against my will. Hold me! Hold me!"

Madame Louise seized her by the arm.

"Courage! courage! my poor child," said she; "were it even he, you are in safety here."

"He approaches! He approaches!" cried Lorenza, with despair and horror in her voice, her eyes fixed, and her arms extended towards the door of the room.

"This is madness. Dare any one, think you, enter unannounced the apartment of Madame Louise of France? To obtain admittance, he must be the bearer of an order from the king."

"Oh, madame, I know not how he procured an entrance," cried Lorenza, recoiling with terror; "but I do know that

he is ascending the stairs; that he is scarcely ten paces distant; that he is here."

At that moment the door opened. Alarmed at such a strange coincidence, the princess could not prevent herself from starting back. A nun appeared.

"Who is there?" asked the abbess, hurriedly, "and what do you want?"

"Madame, a gentleman has just arrived who wishes to speak to your Royal Highness."

"His name?"

"The Count de Fenix."

"Is that he?" asked the princess, turning to Lorenza, "and do you know that name?"

"I do not know that name; but it is he, madame, it is he!"

"What does this gentleman want?" inquired the princess, addressing the nun.

"Having been sent on a mission to the King of France by his Majesty the King of Prussia, he wishes, he says, to have the honour of a moment's conversation with your Royal Highness."

The princess reflected for a moment; then, turning to Lorenza, "Retire into that cabinet," said she. Lorenza obeyed. "And you, sister," continued the princess, "admit this gentleman." The nun curtseyed low and left the room.

Having ascertained that the door of the cabinet was securely fastened, the princess seated herself in her arm-chair, and awaited the termination of the strange scene in which she found herself involved. Yet she could not subdue a certain degree of agitation.

Almost immediately the nun reappeared, followed by the person whom we have already seen, on the day of the presentation, announce himself as the Count de Fenix.

He was dressed in the same costume,—a Prussian uniform with the military wig and black stock. His large, expressive eyes were cast down at first in the presence of

the royal abbess, but only in a manuer to indicate the respect which any gentleman, how high soever his rank, was called on to exhibit before a princess of France. But immediately raising them again, with a look which almost implied that he had already shown too great humility,—

“Madame,” said he, “I thank madame for the favour you have shown me; but I did not doubt that I should obtain this favour, knowing that madame is the generous patron of all the unhappy.”

“Monsieur, I endeavour to assist all such,” replied the princess, with dignity; for she felt certain that she should, before the lapse of many minutes, put to shame this man, who so impudently dared to claim her protection, after having deceived and ill-treated one confided to his care.

The count bowed, without betraying any consciousness of understanding the double meaning of her words.

She then continued, with something of irony in her tone: “In what way can I render you any assistance, monsieur?”

“You can aid me in a matter of the greatest moment, madame.”

“Speak, monsieur!”

“None but weighty considerations could have induced me, madame, to intrude in this retreat which you have chosen; but you have, I believe, given shelter here to a person in whom I am deeply interested.”

“The name of that person, monsieur?”

“Lorenza Feliciani.”

“And how does her fate concern you? Is she your relation, your sister?”

“She is my wife.”

“Your wife?” said the princess, raising her voice so that she might be heard in the cabinet. “Lorenza Feliciani is the Countess de Fenix?”

“Yes, madame, Lorenza Feliciani is the Countess de Fenix,” replied the count, with the utmost coolness.

“I have no Countess de Fenix in this convent, monsieur,” replied the princess.

But the count was not to be so repulsed. "Perhaps, madame," said he, "madame is not convinced that Lorenza Feliciani and the Countess de Fenix are one and the same person?"

"I confess, monsieur, that you have guessed my thoughts; I am not well convinced on that point."

"If madame will but command Lorenza Feliciani to be brought hither, you will soon have all doubts on that head cleared away. I entreat your Highness's pardon for urging the matter thus, but I am tenderly attached to the young lady, and she herself, I think, regrets being separated from me."

"Do you think so, monsieur?"

"Yes, madame, unworthy as I am, I think so."

"Ah!" thought the princess, "Lorenza was right; this is indeed a most dangerous man."

The count preserved the most perfect calmness of demeanour, and adhered to the most courtly politeness.

"I must temporise," thought the princess to herself.

"Monsieur," said she, "I cannot give up to you a woman who is not here. If you love, as you say you do, the person whom you seek, I can easily understand why you thus persist in endeavouring to find her; but, believe me, to be successful, you must seek elsewhere."

The count, on entering the room, had cast a rapid glance on every article in it, and his eyes had rested for a single instant only, but that had been sufficient, on a table in a dark corner, on which Lorenza had placed those jewels which she had offered to pay as her dowry to the convent. He knew them again instantly.

"If madame would have the goodness to recollect, and I venture to entreat you to do so, you will remember that Lorenza Feliciani was very lately in this room, that she placed on that table those jewels, and that, after having had the honour of conversing with your Royal Highness, she withdrew."

Just then he caught the eye of the princess turning un-

consciously towards the cabinet. "She withdrew," he continued, "into that cabinet, so that now I only wait for the permission of your Royal Highness to order her to return hither; which she will do immediately, I feel certain."

The princess coloured with shame at the thought that she had lowered herself so far as to attempt to deceive this man, from whom, as it seemed, nothing could be hidden; and she could not conceal her vexation at the uselessness of all her efforts. She recollects, however, that Lorenza had fastened the door from within, and that, consequently, nothing but the impulse of her own free will could induce her to leave the cabinet.

"But even suppose she were here," said she, "what would she do?"

"Nothing, madame; she would merely tell you, madame, that she wishes to go with me, being my wife."

This last word re-assured the princess, for she recollects the protestations of Lorenza.

"Your wife!" exclaimed she, with indignation. "Are you sure of that?"

"You do not seem to believe me. Nevertheless, it is not quite incredible that the Count de Fenix should have married Lorenza Feliciani, and that, having married her, he demands back his wife."

"His wife!" she repeated, impatiently; "you dare to say Lorenza Feliciani is your wife?"

"Yes, madame, I dare to say so," answered the count, with the most natural air in the world, "because it is true."

"You are married to her?"

"I am."

"Legitimately?"

"Certainly; and if you thus persist in doubting my word, I shall place before your eyes the register of my marriage, signed by the priest who united us."

The princess started; so much coolness and self-possession shook all her convictions.

The count opened his pocket-book and unfolded a paper. "This is the register of my marriage, madame, and the proof that I have a right to claim that woman as my wife; if your Royal Highness will read it, and note the signature—"

"The signature!" repeated the princess, in a tone of doubt more insulting to the stranger than her indignation had been; "but if this signature—"

"This signature is that of the vicar of Saint Jean de Strasbourg, who is well known to Prince Louis, Cardinal de Rohan, and if his Eminence were here—"

"His Eminence is here!" cried the princess, fixing her flashing eyes on the count. "He has not yet left St. Denis, and is now with the canons of the cathedral; so that nothing is easier for us than to ascertain the truth of what you assert."

"That is indeed a fortunate circumstance for me," replied the count, coolly putting up the paper again in his pocket-book. "When your Royal Highness has heard the cardinal's testimony, I trust that your Highness's unjust suspicions will be dispelled."

"Monsieur, this impudent perseverance is most revolting to me," said the princess, ringing her bell violently.

The nun who had introduced the count appeared.

"Let my groom mount his horse instantly, and carry this note to his Eminence the Cardinal de Rohan; he will be found at the chapter of the cathedral. Let him come hither without a moment's delay; I wait his arrival anxiously."

Whilst giving these directions, the princess wrote hastily a few words on a slip of paper, and, handing it to the nun, she added, in a whisper, "Let a couple of archers of the guard be placed in the corridor, and take care that no one leave the convent without my permission."

The count had followed all the movements of the princess, whom he now saw determined to contest the point with him to the very last; but, evidently decided not to yield the

victory to her, he drew nearer to the door of the cabinet whilst she was writing, fixed his eyes on it, pronounced some words in a low voice, and extending his hands toward it, moved them to and fro with a regular and steady motion.

The princess, turning, saw him in this attitude, and exclaimed, "What are you doing there, monsieur?"

"Madame," said the count, "I am adjuring Lorenza Feliciani to appear, and declare to you of her own free will that I am not an impostor nor a forger. But this is not to prevent your Royal Highness from requiring the other proofs you have mentioned."

"Monsieur!"

"Lorenza Feliciani," cried the count, overpowering all opposition, even that of the princess, "leave that cabinet and come hither! Come!"

But the door remained closed.

"Come forth! It is my will!" repeated the count.

Then the key was heard turning in the lock, and the princess, with inexpressible alarm, saw the young girl enter, her eyes fixed on the count without any expression either of anger or hatred.

"What are you doing, my child?" cried the princess. "Why do you return to the man from whom you fled? You were in safety here; I told you so."

"She is also in safety in my house, madame," answered the count. "Are you not, Lorenza? Are you not safe with me?"

"Yes," replied the young girl.

The princess, overcome with astonishment, clasped her hands, and sank back in her chair.

"And now, Lorenza," added the count, quietly, but yet with a tone of command, "I am accused of having made you act contrary to your wishes. Say, have I ever done so?"

"Never," answered the young girl, clearly and distinctly, yet without accompanying the denial by any movement.

"In that case," cried the princess, "what do you mean by all that tale of your having been carried off?"

Lorenza remained silent, and looked at the count as if life and speech hung on his lips.

"Madame wishes doubtless to know how you left the convent, Lorenza. Relate to her all that happened, from the moment of your fainting until you awoke in the post-chaise."

Lorenza was still silent.

"Relate all that occurred from first to last; do not omit anything," continued the count; "it is my will that you should do so."

"I do not remember," she replied.

"Search your memory, and you will recollect all."

"Ah, yes, yes!" said Lorenza, in the same monotonous tone, "now I remember."

"Speak, then."

"When I fainted, at the very moment that the scissors touched my hair, I was carried back to my cell and laid on my bed. My mother remained with me until night, when, seeing that I continued in the same state of insensibility, they sent for the village surgeon. He felt my pulse, passed a looking-glass before my lips, and, discovering no sign of life in me, pronounced me dead."

"But how do you know all that?" asked the princess.

"Her Highness wishes to know how you know that," repeated the count.

"Strange!" replied Lorenza, "I was able to see and hear, but I could not open my eyes, nor speak, nor move. I was in a sort of lethargy."

"In fact," said the princess, "Tronchin has sometimes spoken to me of persons who had fallen into a lethargy, and who, being to all appearance dead, were interred alive."

"Proceed, Lorenza."

"My mother was in despair, and would not believe that I was dead; she said that she would pass that night and

the following day by my side. She did so; but the thirty-six hours during which she watched over me passed away without my making the slightest movement, or without a sigh having escaped my lips. Thrice a priest came to visit my mother; and each time he told her that it was rebelling against the will of God thus to persist in keeping my body on earth when He possessed my soul; for, as I had died at the moment when I was pronouncing my vows, he did not doubt, he said, but that my soul had winged its flight to heaven. My mother, by her entreaties, prevailed on him to allow her to watch by me another night,—that of Monday. On Tuesday morning they found me still insensible.

“My mother withdrew, vanquished, leaving me to the nuns, who by this time were loud in their exclamations against her impiety. The tapers were lighted in the chapel, in which, according to custom, I was to be laid out during one day and night. As I had not pronounced my vows, the sisters dressed me in a white robe, put a crown of white roses on my head, crossed my arms on my bosom, and placed my coffin on a bier. During this last operation a thrill of horror ran through my veins; for I repeat, although my eyelids were closed, I saw everything as if they had been wide open.

“The bier was carried into the church, and there—my face still uncovered, as is the custom in Italy—I was placed in the middle aisle, with lighted tapers around me, and a vase of holy water at my feet. During the day the peasants of Subiaco entered the church, prayed for me, and sprinkled my body with the holy water. Night came on; and as the visitors had ceased, the doors of the church were closed, except a little side door, and the nun who took care of the sick remained alone beside me.

“One terrible thought never left me during my trance, and now it became more dreadful; on the morrow I was to be buried,—buried alive, if some unknown power did not come to my aid! I heard the hours strike, one after

another; first nine, then ten, then eleven. Each stroke found an echo in my trembling heart; for, oh, horror! I listened to my own death-knell.

“What efforts did I not make to break my icy sleep, to burst the iron bonds which held me down in my coffin! But Heaven at last had pity on me. Midnight struck. At the very first stroke, my frame was shaken by a convulsive shudder, — like that which I always experienced when Acharat approached me; then my heart was stirred, and I beheld him appear at the door of the church.”

“Were your feelings at that moment those of fear?” asked the Count de Fenix.

“No; they were feelings of happiness, joy, ecstasy. For I knew that he came to snatch me from the dreadful death which seemed before inevitable. He advanced slowly towards my coffin, looked on me for a moment with a melancholy smile; then he said, ‘Arise, follow me!’ The bonds which fastened me were broken at that powerful voice; I rose, and I put one foot out of the coffin. ‘Are you glad to live?’ he asked. ‘Oh, yes!’ I replied. Follow me, then,’ said he.

“The sister who was appointed to watch the dead had fulfilled this duty towards so many of the nuns that she had become careless and indifferent, and slept soundly in her chair. I passed close by her without awaking her, as I followed him who, for the second time, had saved me from death. We reached the outer court and once more saw the cloudless firmament, studded with stars, and felt the cool night-breeze, which the dead feel not, but which is so grateful to the living.

“‘And now,’ said he, ‘before leaving the convent, choose for yourself. Do you wish to be a nun or to follow me?’ ‘I will follow you,’ I replied. We reached the entrance gate; it was locked. ‘Where are the keys?’ he asked. ‘In the pocket of the portress, on a chair near her bed,’ I replied. ‘Enter the lodge,’ said he, ‘and bring them without making any noise to awake her.’ I obeyed, entered the lodge, found the key, and brought it to him.

"Five minutes afterwards the gate was opened, and we were in the street. I took his arm, and we hurried toward the outskirts of the village of Subiaco. About a hundred paces from its last house a post-chaise was in waiting; we entered it and drove off at a rapid pace."

"And no force was used, no threat was uttered; you followed him voluntarily?"

Lorenza remained mute.

"Madame asks you, Lorenza, if by any threat, any violence, you were forced to accompany me?"

"No."

"And why did you do so?"

"Say, why did you accompany me?"

"Because I loved you," said Lorenza.

The Count de Fenix turned towards the princess with a triumphant smile.

CHAPTER LII.

THE CARDINAL DE ROHAN.

STRONG as was the mind of the Princess Louise, all that she had just heard seemed so extraordinary to her that she could not help asking herself whether the man who stood before her were not a real magician, disposing of hearts and understandings at his will.

But the Count de Fenix was not yet satisfied.

“That is not all, madame,” said he, “and your Highness has only heard a part of our history. Some doubts might remain on your mind did you not hear the rest from her own lips.”

Then, turning towards the young woman, —

“Do you remember, dear Lorenza,” said he, “the rest of our journey; and how we visited Milan, the lake Maggiore, the Oberland, the Righi, and the magnificent Rhine, the Tiber of the North?”

“Yes,” answered she, still in the same monotonous voice, “yes; Lorenza saw all that.”

“Dragged onwards by that man, was it not, my child? — yielding to an irresistible power which you did not yourself comprehend?” asked the princess.

“Why should you think so, madame, after what your Highness has heard? But if you wish for yet more palpable and material proofs, here is a letter written by Lorenza to me. I was obliged to leave her alone for a short time at Mayence. Well, she regretted me and longed for my return; for in my absence she wrote me these lines, which your Highness may read.”

The count took out of his pocket-book a note, which he handed to the princess. She read as follows:—

Return, Acharat! When you leave me, all hope and joy depart. Ah, when shall I be yours through all eternity?

LORENZA.

The princess rose, anger flashing in her eyes, and approached Lorenza with the note in her hand. The young woman appeared neither to see nor hear her; her whole soul seemed to hang on the count's lips.

"I understand," said the count, quickly, before the princess could utter a word; "you doubt whether this note be really written by her or not. That point can easily be settled. Lorenza, speak! Who wrote this note?"

He took the note, placed it in her hand, and she immediately pressed it to her heart.

"Lorenza wrote it," said she.

"Does Lorenza know what it contains?"

"Yes."

"Then tell the princess what is in the letter, that she may believe me when I say you love me. Tell her; it is my will."

Lorenza appeared to make an effort; then without opening the note, or turning her eyes on it, she read its contents.

"This is incredible," said the princess; "I cannot trust the evidence of my own senses; there is something inexplicable and supernatural in all this."

"It was this letter," continued the Count de Fenix, as if he had not heard what the princess said, "which determined me to hasten our marriage. I loved Lorenza as much as she loved me. We were in a position which might have given rise to unfounded suspicions. Besides, in the adventurous life which I lead, some accident might happen to me. I might be killed; I might die, and I wished, in case of such an event, that all my fortune

should belong to Lorenza. On arriving at Strasburg, therefore, we were married."

"You were married?

"Yes, madame."

"It is impossible!"

"Why so, madame?" said the count, smiling. "What is there impossible in the fact that the Count de Fenix should marry Lorenza Feliciani?"

"But she told me that she is not your wife."

The count, without replying, turned to Lorenza: "Do you remember on what day we were married?" asked he.

"Yes," she replied; "it was the third of May."

"Where?"

"At Strasburg."

"In what church?"

"In the cathedral; in the chapel of St. John."

"Did you offer any opposition to our union?"

"No, I was only too happy."

"Because, Lorenza," continued the count, "the princess thinks that the marriage was forced on you,— that you hate me."

As he said these words he took Lorenza's hand; a thrill of rapture seemed to run through her whole frame.

"I hate you!" she exclaimed; "oh, no! I love you; you are good, you are generous, you are powerful!"

The count turned towards the princess, as if he had said, "You hear?"

Seized with a kind of horror, the princess had recoiled from the pair before her, and sank at the foot of an ivory crucifix which was fastened against the black velvet hangings of the room.

"Does madame wish for any further information?" asked the count, as he released Lorenza's hand.

"Monsieur," cried the princess, "do not approach me! — nor she either!"

At this moment the noise of wheels was heard in the courtyard, and a carriage stopped at the entrance door.

"Ah!" exclaimed the princess, "here comes the cardinal, and we shall now know the truth."

The Count de Fenix bowed, said a few words to Lorenza in a low voice, and waited with the patience of a man perfectly secure of his position. A moment afterwards the door opened, and his Eminence the Cardinal de Rohan was announced.

The princess, reassured by the presence of a third person, resumed her seat, and desired him to be admitted. The cardinal entered; but scarcely had he made his salutation to the princess, when, perceiving the count, he exclaimed with surprise, "You here, monsieur!"

"Do you know this person?" asked the princess, more and more astonished.

"Yes, madame," said the cardinal.

"Then," cried she, "you will tell me what he is."

"Nothing is more easy," replied the cardinal; "the gentleman is a sorcerer."

"A sorcerer!" murmured the princess.

"Pardon me, madame," said the count; "but I trust that his Highness will explain his words to your satisfaction."

"Has the gentleman been making any predictions to madame, that I see you with a countenance of so much alarm?" asked Monsieur de Rohan.

"The register of the marriage! The register, immediately!" exclaimed the princess.

The cardinal stared with the utmost surprise, not comprehending what this exclamation meant.

"Here it is," said the count, presenting it to the cardinal.

"Monsieur, what is this?" said he.

"I wish to know," said the princess, "whether the signature to that document be genuine or not."

The cardinal took the paper and read it.

"Yes," said he, "it is a perfectly legal register of a marriage, and the signature is that of Monsieur Remy, vicar of St. John's, in Strasburg. But in what way does that concern madame?"

"Oh, it concerns me deeply, monsieur. So the signature is correct?"

"Certainly; but I will not guarantee that it may not have been extorted—"

"Extorted!" cried the princess. "Yes, that is possible."

"And the consent of Lorenza, also?" said the count, with a tone of irony which was aimed directly at the princess.

"But by what means, cardinal, by what means could this signature have been extorted? Do you know?"

"By means which this gentleman has at his disposal,—by means of magic."

"Magic? Is it you, cardinal, who speak to me of magic?"

"Yes, I have said that this gentleman is a sorcerer; and I shall not unsay it."

"Your Eminence must be jesting."

"By no means; and the proof is that I am going, in the presence of your Highness, to have a very serious explanation with him."

"I was myself going to request it from your Eminence," said the count.

"Excellent! But pray, do not forget," said the cardinal, haughtily, "that it is I who am the questioner."

"And do not forget, also," said the count, "that I will answer all your questions before her Highness, if you insist upon it; but I feel certain that you will not insist."

The cardinal smiled contemptuously.

"Monsieur," said he, "to play the magician well is, in our times, rather a difficult task. I have seen you at work, and, to do you justice, you were very successful; but every one will not show the patience, and, above all, the generosity, of her Royal Highness the dauphiness."

"The dauphiness!" exclaimed the princess.

"Yes, madame," said the count; "I have had the honour of being presented to her Royal Highness."

"And how did you repay that honour, monsieur? Come, speak!"

"Alas! much worse than I could have wished; for I have no personal hatred against men, and above all none against women."

"But what did he really do before my august niece?" asked the princess.

"I had the misfortune, madame, to tell her the truth, which she demanded of me."

"Yes, said the cardinal, "a truth which made her swoon."

"Was it my fault," cried the count, in that commanding tone which he could at times assume, "was it my fault that the truth was so terrible that it produced such effects? Was it I who sought the princess? Did I request to be presented to her? On the contrary, I avoided her; I was brought before her almost by force, and she positively commanded me to reply to her questions."

"But what, then, monsieur, was that truth which you declare to have been so terrible?" asked the princess.

"The truth which was hidden by the veil of futurity. I raised the veil, and then she beheld that future which appeared so alarming to your Royal Highness that you fled for shelter from it to a cloister to offer up tears and prayers before the altar —"

"Monsieur! monsieur!" cried the princess.

"Is it my fault if the future, which was revealed to you as one of the sainted, was shadowed forth to me as a prophet, and if the dauphiness, whom it threatens personally, terrified at the sight, fainted when I declared it to her?"

"You hear him acknowledge it," said the cardinal.

"Alas!" sighed the princess.

"For her reign is doomed," continued the count, "as the most fatal and disastrous to the monarchy of any on record."

"Oh, monsieur!" exclaimed the princess.

"For yourself, madame," continued the count, "your prayers have perhaps obtained favour, for you will not see

those events which I foretell; you will be in the bosom of the Lord when they come to pass. But pray! Pray always!"

The princess, overcome by his prophetical words, which agreed too well with the terrors of her own soul, sank again on her knees at the foot of the crucifix, and commenced to pray fervently.

The count turned to the cardinal, and, preceding him towards the embrasure of a window, "Now that we are alone," said he, "what does your Eminence wish with me?"

The cardinal hastened to join him. The princess seemed wholly absorbed in her prayers, and Lorenza remained silent and motionless in the middle of the room. Her eyes were wide open, but she seemed to see nothing. The two men stood apart in the embrasure of the window half concealed by the curtains.

"What are your Eminence's wishes?" repeated the count.

"First, I wish to know who you are," replied the cardinal.

"Yet you seem to know. Did you not say that I was a sorcerer?"

"Yes; but when I met you formerly you were called Joseph Balsamo, and now you are called the Count de Fenix."

"Well, that only proves that I have changed my name, nothing more."

"Very true; but are you aware that such changes may make Monsieur de Sartines, the minister of police, rather inquisitive about you?"

The count smiled.

"Oh, monsieur," said he, "this is a petty warfare for a Rohan! What! your Eminence quibbles about names? *Verba et voces*, as the Latin has it. Is there nothing worse with which I can be reproached?"

"You seem to have become satirical," said the cardinal.

"I have not become so, it is my character."

"In that case I shall do myself the pleasure of lowering your tone a little."

"Do so, monsieur."

"I am certain I shall please the dauphiness by so doing."

"Which may be not altogether useless to you, considering the terms on which you stand at present with her," answered Balsamo, with the greatest coolness.

"And suppose, most learned dealer in horoscopes, that I should cause you to be arrested?" said the cardinal.

"I should say that your Eminence would commit a very grave mistake in doing so."

"Indeed?" said the prince-cardinal, with withering contempt, "and, pray, who will suffer from my mistake?"

"Yourself, monseigneur."

"Then I shall give the order for your arrest this moment, monsieur; and we shall soon know who this Baron Balsamo, Count de Fenix, is,—this illustrious branch of a genealogical tree not to be discovered in any field of heraldry in Europe."

"But why has your Eminence not asked for information respecting me from your friend, the Count de Breteuil?"

"Monsieur de Breteuil is no friend of mine."

"That is to say, he is no longer so. Yet he must have been one of your best friends when you wrote him a certain letter—"

"What letter?" asked the cardinal, drawing nearer to the count.

"A little closer, Monsieur le Cardinal; I do not wish to speak loud, for fear of compromising you,—that letter which you wrote from Vienna to Paris, to endeavour to prevent the marriage of the dauphin."

The prelate could not repress a gesture of alarm.

"I know that letter by heart," continued the count, coldly.

"Then Breteuil has turned traitor!"

"How so?"

“Because when the marriage was decided on I demanded back my letter, and he told me he had burned it.”

“Ah! he dared not tell you he had lost it!”

“Lost it?”

“Yes; and you know that a lost letter may be found by some one.”

“And so my letter—”

“Was found by me. Oh, by the merest chance I assure you, one day, when crossing the marble court at Versailles.”

“And did you not return it to the Count de Breteuil?”

“I took good care not to do so.”

“Why so?”

“Because, being a sorcerer, I knew that although I wished to be of all the service I could to your Eminence, you wished to do me all the harm you could. So, you understand? A disarmed man who journeys through a wood where he knows he will be attacked would be a fool not to pick up a loaded pistol which he found at his foot.”

The cardinal's head swam, and he was obliged to lean against the window-frame for a few minutes; but after an instant's hesitation, during which the count eagerly watched every variation of his countenance, —

“So be it,” said he. “It shall never be said that a prince of my house gave way before the threats of a charlatan. Though that letter should be shown to the dauphiness herself; though, in a political point of view, it ruin me, I shall maintain my character as a loyal subject and faithful ambassador. I shall say what is the truth, — that I thought the alliance hurtful to the interests of my country; and my country will defend me, and weep for my fate.”

“But if some one should happen to relate how the young, handsome, gallant ambassador, confident in the name of Rohan and the title of prince, and being most graciously received by the Archduchess Marie Antoinette, said so,

not because he saw anything in the marriage hurtful to France, but because in his vanity he imagined he saw something more than affability in her manner toward him? What would the loyal subject and faithful ambassador reply then?"

"He would deny, monsieur, that there ever had existed the sentiment that your words imply; there is no proof that it did exist."

"Yes, monsieur, you mistake. There is the strongest proof, in the coldness of the dauphiness towards you."

The cardinal hesitated.

"Monseigneur," said the count, "trust me, it is better for us to remain good friends than to quarrel,—which we should have done before this, had I not been more prudent than you."

"Good friends?"

"Why not? Our friends are those who render us good offices."

"Have I ever asked you for any?"

"No, and that is where you have been wrong; for during the two days you were in Paris —"

"I in Paris?"

"Yes, you. Why attempt to hide that from me, who am a sorcerer? You left the dauphiness at Soissons; you came post to Paris by Villers-Cotterets, and Dammartin,—that is to say, the shortest road,—and you hastened to request your kind friends there for assistance, which they all refused. After their refusals you once more set out post for Compiègne in despair."

The cardinal seemed overwhelmed.

"And what sort of assistance might I have expected from you," he asked, "had I addressed myself to you?"

"That assistance which a man who makes gold can grant."

"And what matters it to me that you can make gold?"

"*Peste!* when your Eminence has to pay five hundred thousand francs within forty-eight hours. Am I not right? Is not that the sum?"

“Yes, that is indeed the sum.”

“And yet you ask what matters it to have a friend who can make gold ! It matters just this, — that the five hundred thousand francs which you cannot procure elsewhere, you may procure from him.”

“And where?” asked the cardinal.

“In the Rue St. Claude.”

“How shall I know your house?”

“By a griffin’s head in bronze, which serves as knocker to the gate.”

“When may I present myself?”

“The day after to-morrow, monseigneur, at six in the evening; and afterwards you may come as often and whenever you please. But stay; we have just finished our conversation in time, for the princess, I see, has ended her prayers.”

The cardinal was conquered, and, no longer attempting to resist, he approached the princess. “Madame,” said he, “I am obliged to confess that the Count de Fenix is perfectly correct; his register of marriage is authentic and valid, and he has explained all the circumstances to my perfect satisfaction.”

The count bowed. “Has your Royal Highness any further commands for me?” he asked.

“I wish to speak once more to the young woman,” she replied. Then, turning to Lorenza, “Is it of your own free and unrestrained will that you leave this convent, in which you sought refuge?”

“Madame asks you,” said Balsamo, quickly, “whether it is of your own free and unfettered choice that you leave this convent. Answer, Lorenza.”

“Yes,” said the young woman, “it is of my own free and unfettered will.”

“And to accompany your husband, the Count de Fenix?”

“And to accompany me?” repeated the count.

“Oh, yes !” exclaimed Lorenza.

“In that case,” said the princess, “I wish to retain

neither one nor other; for it would be doing violence to your feelings. But if there is in all this anything out of the common order of events, may the vengeance of Heaven fall on him who, for his own advantage or profit, troubles the harmony, the proper course of nature! Go, Count de Fenix! Go, Lorenza Feliciani! Only, take with you your jewels."

"They are for the use of the poor, madame," said the count, "and distributed by your hands, the alms will be doubly acceptable to God. I only demand back my horse, Djerid."

"You can claim him as you pass, monsieur. Go!"

The count bowed low, and gave his arm to Lorenza, who took it, and left the room without uttering a word.

"Ah, monseigneur," said the princess, shaking her head sorrowfully, "there are incomprehensible and fatal omens in the very air which we breathe!"

CHAPTER LIII.

THE RETURN FROM ST. DENIS.

AFTER leaving Philip, Gilbert, as we have said, had re-entered the crowd. But not now with a heart bounding with joyful anticipation did he throw himself into the noisy billow of human beings; his soul was wounded to the quick, and Philip's kind reception of him, and all his friendly offers of assistance, had no power to soothe him.

Andrée never suspected that she had been cruel to Gilbert. The lovely and serene young girl was entirely ignorant that there could be between her and the son of her nurse any point of contact either for pain or for pleasure. She revolved above all the lower spheres of life, casting light or shadow on them according as she herself was gay or sad. But now the shadow of her disdain had fallen on Gilbert and frozen him to the soul, while she, following only the impulse of her nature, knew not even that she had been scornful. But Gilbert, like a gladiator disarmed, had offered his naked breast to the full brunt of her haughty looks and disdainful words, and now, bleeding at every pore, his philosophy suggested nothing better than the consolation of despair.

From the moment that he once more plunged into the crowd, he cared neither for horses nor men. Collecting all his strength, he dashed forward like a wild boar with the spear in its side, and, at the risk of being crushed or trodden under foot, he opened a passage for himself through the multitude. When the denser mass of the people had been crossed, he began to breathe more freely,

and looking round, he discovered that he was alone, and that around him was the green grass, the cool water, and solitude.

Without knowing whither he was going, he had advanced towards the Seine, and he now found himself opposite the isle of St. Denis. Exhausted, not from fatigue of body, but from anguish of mind, he sank on the turf, and grasping his head with both hands, he began to roar hoarsely, as if by these inarticulate sounds alone could he express his rage and grief.

All those vague and senseless hopes which until then had shed a glimmering light on the darkness of his soul, and whose existence he scarcely ventured to confess even to himself, were now at one blow utterly annihilated. To whatsoever height genius, science, or study might raise him in the social scale, he must to Andrée always remain the Gilbert that he had been,—a thing, or a man, to use her own words to her father, not worth the slightest regard, not worth even the trouble of looking down upon him.

For a moment he had thought that, seeing him in Paris, learning that he had come on foot, knowing that he had determined to struggle out of obscurity into light,—he had thought that Andrée would applaud his resolution; but instead of applause, what had he met with as the reward of so much fatigue and of such firm determination? The same scornful indifference with which he had been treated at Taverney. Even more,—was she not almost angry when she heard that his eyes had had the audacity to look on her music-book? Had he only touched that music-book with the tip of his finger, he would have been doubtless considered only worthy to be burned at the stake.

By weak characters, any deception, any mistake, with regard to those they love, is quickly forgotten, and they bend under the blow only to rise again stronger and more persevering than before. They vent their sufferings in

complaints and tears, but their resistance is only passive; nay, their love often increases by that which should destroy it, and they whisper to themselves that their submissiveness will at last have its reward. Towards that reward they steadfastly advance, whether the road be easy or the reverse; if it be unfavourable, they will be longer in attaining their end, that is all, but they will attain it at last.

It is not thus with strong minds, obstinate natures, and powerful wills. They are indignant when they see their own blood flowing; at the sight their energy augments so furiously that they seem to hate rather than to love. Indeed, with them love and hate are so closely allied that they often are not aware of the transition from one to the other. So it was with Gilbert. When he flung himself on the ground, overcome by his feelings, did he love or hate Andrée? He knew not; he suffered intensely, that was all. But, not having the virtue of long-suffering, he shook off his dejection of soul, and determined to carry into practice some energetic resolution.

“She does not love me,” thought he, “it is true; but had I any right to hope that she would? The only feeling that I had a right to hope for was that kindly interest which attaches to the unfortunate who strive with energy to rise above their wretchedness. Her brother felt this; she did not feel it. He said, ‘Who knows? perhaps you may become a Colbert, a Vauban!’ If I became either one or other he would do me justice; he would give me his sister as a reward for the glory I had won for myself, as he would now give her in exchange for my personal nobility, had I been born his equal. But as for her,—oh, yes! I feel it,—yes, although Colbert or Vauban, I should never be to her other than Gilbert! What she despises in me is what nothing can efface, nothing gild, nothing cover,—it is the lowness of my birth. As if, supposing I attain my object, I should not then be greater, having risen to her level, than if I had been born beside her. Ah, senseless,

unthinking creature! Woman! woman! that is, imperfection! Do you trust in her open look, her expansive forehead, her beaming smile, her queenly carriage, her beauty which makes her worthy to be an empress? Fool! she is an affected, starched country girl, bound up, swathed, in aristocratic prejudices. The gay and showy young noblemen with empty heads, mere weathercocks, who have all the means and appliances for learning, but who know nothing, — they are her equals; they are things and men on whom she may bestow attention. But Gilbert? Gilbert is a dog, — nay, lower than a dog! She asked, I think, for news of Mahon; she did not ask how it had fared with Gilbert. Oh, she knows not then that I am as strong as they; that, if clothed like them, I should be as handsome; that I have what they have not, — an inflexible will; and that if I wished — ”

A threatening smile curled his lip, and he left the sentence unfinished; then slowly, and with a deep frown, his head sank on his breast. What passed at that moment in his dark and gloomy soul? Under what terrible idea did that pale forehead, already furrowed with painful thoughts, droop? Who shall tell? Is it the boatman who slowly glides down the river in his skiff, humming the song of Henri-Quatre? Is it the laughing washerwoman who is returning from the splendid scene at St. Denis, and who, turning aside from her path to avoid him, probably takes the young loiterer for a thief, lying as he is at full length on the grass amidst the lines hung with linen ?

After half an hour's reflection Gilbert arose, calm and resolved. He approached the bank of the Seine, and refreshed himself with a deep draught of water; then, looking around, he saw on his left the distant waves of people pouring out of St. Denis. ~~Amid the throng no~~ could distinguish the principal carriages forced to go slowly from the crowd of spectators that pressed on them, and taking the road to St. Ouen.

The dauphiness had expressed a desire that her entrance

into the kingdom should be a family festival, and the good Parisians had taken advantage of this kind wish to place their families so near the royal train that many of them had mounted on the seats of the footmen, and some held on by the heavy springs which projected from the carriages, without manifesting the least fear.

Gilbert soon recognised Andréée's carriage; Philip was galloping, or rather, we should say, reining in his prancing horse, close beside it.

"It is well," said he; "I must know whither she is going, and for that purpose I must follow her."

The dauphiness was to sup at Muette in private with the king, the dauphin, the Count de Provence, and the Count d'Artois. At St. Denis the king had invited the dauphiness, and had given her a list of the guests and a pencil, desiring her to erase the name of any one whom she did not wish to be present. Now, it must be confessed that Louis carried his forgetfulness of the respect due to her so far as to include in it the name of Madame Dubarry. It was the last on the list, and when the dauphiness reached it her cheek turned pale and her lip quivered; but, following the instructions of the empress her mother, she recovered her self-possession, and with a sweet smile returning the list and the pencil to the king, she expressed herself most happy to be admitted thus from the first to the intimacy of his family circle.

Gilbert knew nothing of all this, and it was only at Muette that he discovered the equipage of the countess, followed by Zamore on his tall white charger. Fortunately it was dark; and concealing himself behind a clump of trees, he lay down and waited.

The king supped with his daughter-in-law and his mistress, and was in charming spirits; more especially when he saw the dauphiness receive the countess even more graciously than she had done at Compiègne. But the dauphin seemed grave and anxious, and, pretending that he suffered from a violent headache, retired before they

sat down to supper. The entertainment was prolonged until eleven o'clock.

In the mean time the retinue of the dauphiness—and the haughty Andrée was forced to acknowledge that she formed one of them—supped in tents to the music of the king's private band, who had been ordered to attend for that purpose. Besides these,—as the tents could not accommodate all,—fifty gentlemen supped at tables spread in the open air, waited on by fifty lackeys in the royal livery.

Gilbert, still hidden in the clump of trees, lost nothing of this spectacle; whilst he supped at the same time as the others on a piece of bread which he had bought at Clichy-la-Garenne.

After supper the dauphiness and the king appeared on a balcony to take leave of their guests. As each person departed, he passed below the balcony to salute his Majesty and madame the dauphiness. The dauphiness already knew many who had accompanied her from Compiègne, and those whom she did not know the king named to her. From time to time a gracious word or a well-turned compliment fell from her lips, diffusing joy in the breasts of those to whom it was addressed.

Gilbert, from his distant post, saw the meanness of their homage, and murmured, "I am greater than those people, since for all the gold in the world I would not do what they are doing."

At last the turn of the Baron de Taverney and his family came. Gilbert rose on one knee.

"Monsieur Philip," said the dauphiness, "I give you leave of absence, in order that you may accompany your father and your sister to Paris."

Gilbert heard these words distinctly, which, in the silence of the night, and amidst the respectful attention of all around, vibrated in his ears.

Then she added: "Monsieur de Taverney, I cannot promise you apartments until I instal my household at

Versailles. You can, therefore, in the mean time, accompany your daughter to Paris. Do not forget me, mademoiselle."

The baron passed on with his son and daughter; they were succeeded by many others, to whom the dauphiness made similar speeches, but Gilbert cared no longer for her words. He glided out of the clump of trees and followed the baron amidst the confused cries of two hundred footmen running after their masters and calling to a hundred coachmen, while their shouts were accompanied by the thundering of numerous carriages rolling along the paved road.

As the baron had one of the carriages of the court at his command, it waited for them apart from the general crowd. When, accompanied by Andrée and Philip, he had entered it, the latter said to the footman who was closing the door, "Mount on the seat beside the coachman, my friend."

"Why so? why so?" asked the baron, hastily.

"Because the poor devil has been on his legs since morning, and must be tired by this time."

The baron grumbled something which Gilbert did not hear, while the footman mounted beside the coachman.

Gilbert drew nearer. At the moment when they were about to start, it was perceived that the trace had become unbuckled. The coachman jumped down, and the coach remained for a few moments stationary.

"It is very late," said the baron.

"I am dreadfully fatigued," said Andrée. "Are you sure we shall get beds?"

"I hope so," said Philip; "I sent on La Brie and Nicole from Soissons with a letter to a friend of mine, desiring him to engage a small garden pavilion for us, which his mother and sister occupied last year. It is not a very splendid abode, but it is suitable enough; you do not wish to receive company; you only want a stopping-place for the present."

"Faith," exclaimed the baron, "whatever it is, it will be better than Taverney."

"Unfortunately, father, that is true," replied Philip, in a melancholy tone.

"Are there any trees?" asked André.

"Oh, yes; and very fine ones, too. But, in all probability, you will not have long to enjoy them, for as soon as the marriage is over, you will be presented at court."

"Well, this is all a dream, I fear," said the baron; "do not awake us too soon, Philip. Have you given the proper direction to the coachman?"

Gilbert listened anxiously.

"Yes, father."

Gilbert, who had heard all this conversation, had for a moment hoped to discover the address.

"No matter," said he, "I shall follow them; it is only a league to Paris."

The trace was fastened, the coachman mounted his seat, and the carriage was again in motion.

But the king's horses go fast when they are not in a procession which obliges them to go slowly, and now they darted forward so rapidly that they recalled to poor Gilbert's recollection the road to Lachaussée, his weakness, and his fainting. He made an effort and reached the foot-board behind, which was vacant, as the weary footman was seated beside the coachman. Gilbert grasped it, sprang up, and seated himself. But scarcely had he done so, when the thought struck him that he was behind André's carriage, and in the footman's place.

"No, no," muttered the inflexible young man, "it shall never be said that I did not struggle to the last; my legs are tired, but my arms are strong."

Then, seizing the footboard with his hands, he followed at full speed, supported by the strength of his arms, and keeping his hold in spite of jolts and shocks, rather than capitulate with his conscience.

"At least I shall know her address," murmured he. "True, I shall have to pass one more bad night; but tomorrow I shall rest whilst I copy my music. Besides, I

have still some money, and I may take two hours for sleep if I like."

Then he reflected that as Paris was such a large place, and as he was quite unacquainted with it, he might lose his way after the baron and his daughter should have entered the house chosen for them by Philip. Fortunately it was then near midnight, and day would break at half-past three.

As all these reflections passed through Gilbert's mind, he remarked that they were passing through a spacious square, in the centre of which was a large equestrian statue.

"Ha! This looks like the Place des Victoires," cried he, with a mingled sensation of surprise and joy.

The carriage turned. Andrée put her head out of the window and looked back. "It is the statue of the late king," said Philip; "we are now near the house."

They descended a steep street so rapidly that Gilbert was nearly thrown under the wheels.

"Here we are, at last!" cried Philip. Gilbert sprang aside, and hid himself behind the corner of the neighbouring street.

Philip leaped out, rang the bell, and turning, received Andrée in his arms. The baron got out last.

"Well," cried he, "are those scoundrels going to keep us here all night?"

At that moment the voices of La Brie and Nicole were heard, and a gate was opened. The three travellers disappeared in a dark court, and the gate closed behind them.

The carriage drove off on its way to the king's stable. The house which had received the strangers was in no way remarkable in its appearance; but the lamps of the carriage, in passing, had flashed on that next to it, and Gilbert read over the gateway the words "Hôtel d'Armenonville."

It only remained for him to discover the name of the street. He gained the nearest extremity, that by which

the carriage had disappeared, and to his great surprise he found himself close to the fountain at which he was in the habit of drinking. He advanced a few steps farther in a street parallel to that which he had left, and discovered the baker's shop where he usually bought his loaf. Doubting still, he went back to the corner of the street; and there, by the light of a neighbouring lamp, he read the words which had struck him when returning with Rousseau from their botanical excursion in the forest of Meudon three days before, — Rue Plastrière. Andrée, consequently, was not one hundred paces distant from him, — not so far off as she had been at Taverney, when he slept in his little room at the castle gate !

Then he regained his domicile, scarcely daring to hope to find the end of the cord left out, by which the latch of the door was lifted. But Gilbert's star was in the ascendant; a few ravelled threads were hanging out, by which he pulled the whole, and the door opened gently at his touch.

He felt his way to the stairs, mounted step by step without making the least noise, and at last put his hand on the padlock of the garret door, in which Rousseau had kindly left the key.

Ten minutes afterwards fatigue asserted its power over his disquieted thoughts, and he slept soundly, although longing for the morrow.

CHAPTER LIV.

THE GARDEN PAVILION.

HAVING come in late, and thrown himself hastily on his bed, Gilbert had forgotten to place over his window the blind which intercepted the light of the rising sun. At five o'clock, therefore, the rays of light beaming through the window awoke him; he sprang up, fearing that he had slept too long.

Accustomed as he had been to a country life, Gilbert could guess the hour at all times with the utmost precision by the direction of the shadows, and by the paler or warmer tints of light. He ran, therefore, to consult his clock.

The faintness of the morning beams, barely tingeing with their light the topmost boughs of the trees, reassured him; and he found that instead of having risen too late, he had risen too early. He finished his toilet at the garret window, thinking over the events of the preceding day, and exposing with delight his burning and oppressed forehead to the refreshing morning breeze. Then he remembered that Andrée lodged in the next street, near the Hôtel d'Armenonville, and he tried to guess in which of all the houses that he saw she might be.

The sight of the lofty trees on which he looked down recalled her question to Philip,—“Are there any trees there?”

“Might they not have chosen that uninhabited house in the garden?” said Gilbert to himself.

This idea naturally led him to fix his attention on the garden pavilion, where, by a singular coincidence, a sort of noise and stir began to be apparent.

One of the window-shutters of the little abode, which had not been opened apparently for a considerable time, was shaken by an awkward or feeble hand. The wood yielded above, but, held fast, by the damp no doubt, to the frame at the bottom, it resisted the effort made to open it. A second shake, more violent than the first, had a better effect; the two shutters creaked, gave way, and falling back quickly, exposed to view a young girl all in a glow with her exertions, and beating off the dust from her hands.

Gilbert uttered a cry of surprise and stepped back. The young girl, whose face was still flushed with sleep, and who was stretching herself in the fresh air, was Mademoiselle Nicole.

There was no longer any room for doubt. The lodging which Philip had said La Brie and Nicole were preparing was the house before him, and the mansion through whose gateway he had seen the travellers disappear must have its gardens adjoining the rear of the Rue Plastrière. Gilbert's movement was so abrupt, that if Nicole had not been completely absorbed in the lazy meditation so delightful at the moment of waking, she must have discovered our philosopher at his skylight.

But Gilbert had retired all the more speedily, as he had no intention that Nicole, of all persons in the world, should spy him out in so elevated a situation. Had he been on a first floor, and had his open window showed a background of rich hangings or sumptuous furniture, he would not have been so anxious to avoid her eye; but a garret on the fifth story declared him to be still so low in the social scale that he took the greatest care to hide himself. Moreover, there is always, in this world, a great advantage in seeing without being seen. And then, if Andrée should discover that he watched her, would it not be sufficient either to induce her to change her abode, or prevent her walking in the garden?

Alas ! Gilbert's pride still made him of too great importance in his own eyes. What was Gilbert to Andrée?

Would she have moved her foot, either to approach or to avoid him? But these were far from being Nicole's sentiments, and her, consequently, he must shun.

He hid himself carefully therefore; but as he did not wish to withdraw from the window entirely, he ventured to peep out cautiously at one corner.

A second window on the ground-floor of the pavilion, exactly below the first, just then opened, and a white form appeared at it; it was Andrée seemingly just awakened. She was enveloped in a dressing-gown, and was occupied in searching for the slipper which had escaped from her tiny foot, and was lying beneath a chair. It was in vain that Gilbert, each time that he saw Andrée, vowed to build up between them a barrier of hatred instead of giving way to love; the same effect was produced by the same cause. He was obliged to lean against the wall for support; his heart palpitated as if it would have burst, and sent the blood in boiling currents through his whole frame. However, by degrees, his throbbing arteries beat with a calmer motion, and reflection resumed her sway. The problem he had to solve was, as we have said, to see without being seen. He took one of Thérèse's gowns and fastened it with a pin to one of the cords which crossed his window; and, sheltered by this impromptu curtain, he could watch Andrée without running any risk of being discovered by her. The lovely young girl following Nicole's example, stretched out her snowy arms, and then, folding them on the window, she looked out on the garden. Her countenance expressed the liveliest satisfaction at all she saw. Lofty trees shaded the walks with their drooping branches, and everywhere verdure cheered her eye. She, who smiled so seldom on men, smiled on the inanimate objects around her.

The house in which Gilbert lived attracted her eye for a moment, like all the others which surrounded the garden; but as from her apartment only the garrets of the houses were visible, and, consequently, from them alone could she

be seen, she paid no farther attention. How could the proud young girl take any interest in the concerns of a race so far removed from her sphere? Andrée felt convinced, therefore, that no one saw her by whom it was of the least importance that she should not be seen, and that within the bounds of her tranquil retreat there appeared none of those prying or satirical Parisian faces so much dreaded by ladies from the provinces.

The effect was immediate. Leaving her window wide open, so that the fresh and perfumed air might penetrate to the farthest extremity of her apartment, she proceeded towards the mantelpiece and rang a bell, and began to disrobe herself in the shaded corner of the room.

Nicole appeared, undid the straps of a shagreen dressing-case of the reign of Queen Anne, took from it a tortoise-shell comb, and began to comb out Andrée's hair. In a moment the long tresses and shining curls spread like a glossy veil over her shoulders.

Gilbert gave a stifled sigh. At that distance he scarcely saw the beauty of her locks, but he saw Andrée herself, a thousand times more lovely in this deshabille than she would have been in the most splendid attire. He gazed, his whole soul in his eyes.

By chance, as Nicole continued to dress her hair, Andrée raised her eyes and fixed them on Gilbert's garret.

"Yes, yes," said he, "look—gaze, as much as you please; it is all in vain; you can see nothing, and I see all."

But Gilbert was mistaken; Andrée did see something. It was the gown which he had hung up, and which being blown about, had got wrapped round his head like a turban. She pointed out this strange object to Nicole.

Nicole, stopping in her complicated task, pointed with the comb which she held in her hand towards the skylight, and seemed to ask her mistress if that were the object which she meant.

All these gestures, which Gilbert devoured with the

greatest eagerness, had, without his suspecting it, a third spectator. Suddenly a rude hand snatched Thérèse's gown from his head, and he was ready to sink with shame on seeing Rousseau beside him.

"What the devil are you doing there, monsieur?" cried the philosopher, with a terrible frown, and a scrutinising glance at the gown borrowed, without leave asked, from his wife.

"Nothing, monsieur, nothing at all," replied Gilbert, endeavouring to turn Rousseau's attention from the window.

"Nothing? Then why did you hide yourself with the gown?"

"The sun hurts my eyes."

"This window looks towards the west, and the sun dazzles you when rising? You have very delicate eyes, young man!"

Gilbert stammered out some unconnected words, but, feeling that he was only getting deeper in the mire, he at last hid his head in his hands.

"You are speaking falsely, and you are afraid," said Rousseau; "therefore you have been doing wrong."

After this terrible syllogism, which seemed to complete Gilbert's confusion, Rousseau planted himself exactly opposite the window.

From a feeling too natural to require explanation, Gilbert, who so lately trembled to be discovered at the window, rushed forward when he saw Rousseau standing before it.

"Ah, ah!" said the latter, in a tone which froze the blood in Gilbert's veins; "the garden-house is inhabited now."

Gilbert was dumb.

"And by persons," continued the philosopher, "who seem to know my house, for they are pointing to it."

Gilbert, trembling lest he had advanced too far, stepped back quickly; but neither his movement nor the cause

which produced it escaped the jealous eye of Rousseau; he saw that Gilbert feared to be seen.

"No," cried he, seizing the young man by the arm, "you shall not escape, my young friend. There is some plot under this; I know by their pointing to your garret. Place yourself here, if you please;" and he dragged him opposite the skylight, in the full view of those beneath.

"Oh! no, monsieur; no! have mercy!" cried Gilbert, struggling to escape.

But to escape, which for a young and active man like Gilbert would have been an easy task, he must have engaged in a contest with Rousseau, — Rousseau, whom he venerated like some superior being, — and respect restrained him.

"You know those women," said Rousseau; "and they know you."

"No, no, no, monsieur!"

"Then if you do not know them, and if they do not know you, why not show yourself?"

"Monsieur Rousseau, you have sometimes had secrets yourself. Show some pity for mine."

"Ah! traitor!" cried Rousseau. "Yes, I know what sort of a secret yours is. You are a creature of Grimm or Holbach; you have been tutored to act a part in order to impose upon my benevolence; you have gained admittance into my house, and now you betray me to them. Oh, thrice-sodden fool that I am! Silly lover of nature! I thought I was aiding a fellow-creature, and I was bringing a spy into my house!"

"A spy!" exclaimed Gilbert, indignantly.

"Come, Judas, on what day am I to be sold?" continued Rousseau, folding Thérèse's gown tragically about him, and thinking himself sublime in his grief, when unfortunately he was only ridiculous.

"Monsieur, you calumniate me," said Gilbert.

"Calumniate you, you little serpent!" exclaimed Rousseau. "Did I not find you corresponding with my enemies

by signs,—making them understand, perhaps, what is the subject of my new work?"

"Monsieur, had I gained admittance to your house in order to betray the secret of your work, it would have been easier for me to copy some of the manuscripts in your desk than to inform others of the subject by signs."

This was true; and Rousseau felt so plainly that he had given utterance to one of those absurdities which escaped him when his monomania of suspicion was at its height that he got angry.

"Monsieur," said he, "I am sorry for you, but experience has made me severe. My life has been one long series of deceptions. I have been ever the victim of treachery; I have been betrayed, sold, made a martyr, by every one that surrounded me. I am, you must be aware, one of those illustrious unfortunates on whom government has put its ban. In such a situation it is pardonable to be suspicious. Now, I suspect you; therefore you shall leave my house."

Gilbert was far from expecting this peroration. To be turned out! He clenched his hands tightly, and a flash of anger, which almost made Rousseau tremble, lighted up his eyes. The flash was only momentary, however, for the thought occurred to him that in leaving Rousseau's house he should lose the happiness of seeing Andrée every hour of the day, as well as forfeit the friendship of Rousseau; this would be to add misery to shame. His untamable pride gave way, and, clasping his hands, "Monsieur," said he, "listen to me! One word, only one word!"

"I am pitiless," said Rousseau; "men have made me by their injustice more cruel than the tiger. You are in correspondence with my enemies. Go to them, I do not prevent you. League with them, I do not oppose your doing so. Only, leave my house!"

"Monsieur, those two young girls are not your enemies; they are Mademoiselle Andrée and Nicole."

"And who is Mademoiselle Andrée?" said Rousseau, who had heard Gilbert pronounce this name twice or thrice before, and was, consequently, not entirely unacquainted with it. "Come! who is Mademoiselle Andrée? Speak!"

"Mademoiselle Andrée, monsieur, is the daughter of the Baron de Taverney. Oh, pardon me, monsieur, for daring to say so to you, but I love her more than you ever loved Mademoiselle Galley or Madame de Warens! It is she whom I have followed on foot to Paris, without money and without bread, until I fell down on the road exhausted with hunger and fatigue; it is she whom I went to see yesterday at St. Denis, whom I followed, unseen by her, to Muette, and from that to a street near this; it is she whom by chance I discovered this morning to be the occupant of this garden-house; and it is she for whose sake I burn to be a Turenne, a Richelieu, or a Rousseau!"

Rousseau knew the human heart, and felt assured that no one acting a part could speak with the trembling and impassioned accents of Gilbert, or accompany his words with gestures so true to nature.

"So," said he, "this young lady is Mademoiselle Andrée?"

"Yes, Monsieur Rousseau."

"Then you know her?"

"Monsieur, I am the son of her nurse."

"Then you lied just now when you said you did not know her; and if you are not a traitor, you are a liar."

"Monsieur, you tear my very heart! Indeed, you would hurt me less were you to kill me on the spot."

"Pshaw! Mere phrases! — style of Diderot and Marmontel! You are a liar, monsieur."

"Well, yes, yes," said Gilbert; "I am a liar, monsieur; and so much the worse for you if you do not feel for one so forced to lie. A liar! a liar! I leave you, monsieur, but I leave you in despair, and my misery will one day weigh heavy on your conscience."

Rousseau stroked his chin as he looked at this young

man, in whom he found so many points of character resembling his own.

“He has either a great soul, or he is a great rogue,” said he to himself; “but if they are plotting against me, why not hold in my hand a clue to the plot?”

Gilbert had advanced toward the door, and now, with his hand on the lock, stood waiting for the fiat which was to banish or recall him.

“Enough on this subject, my son,” said Rousseau. “If you are as deeply in love as you say, so much the worse for you. But it is now late; you lost the whole of yesterday, and we have to-day thirty pages to copy. Quick, Gilbert; be on the alert!”

Gilbert seized the philosopher’s hand, and pressed it to his lips; he would not certainly have done so much for a king’s. But before leaving the room, and whilst Gilbert, still deeply moved, stood leaning against the door, Rousseau again placed himself at the window to take a last look at the young girls. Andrée had just thrown off her dressing-gown, and taken her gown from Nicole’s hands; she saw his pallid countenance and searching eye, and, starting back, she ordered Nicole to close the window. Nicole obeyed.

“So,” said Rousseau, “my old face frightens her; his young one would not have had the same effect. Oh, lovely youth!” added he, sighing,—

“O gioventu primavera dell’ eta!
O primavera gioventu dell’ anno!”

and once more hanging up Thérèse’s gown on its nail, he went downstairs in a melancholy mood, followed by Gilbert, for whose youth he would, perhaps, at that moment have exchanged his renown, which then rivalled that of Voltaire, and shared with it the admiration of the world.

CHAPTER LV.

THE HOUSE IN THE RUE ST. CLAUDE.

THE Rue St. Claude, in which the Count de Fenix had appointed to meet the Cardinal de Rohan, was not so different at that period from what it is at the present day but that some vestiges of the localities we are about to describe may yet be discovered. It abutted then, as it does now, on the Rue St. Louis and the boulevard, to the latter of which it descended with rather a steep inclination. It boasted of fifteen houses and seven lanterns, and was remarkable besides for two lanes, or *culs de sac*, which branched off from it, — the one on the left, the other on the right, the former serving as the boundary of the Hôtel de Voysins, while the latter took a slice off the large garden of the Convent of St. Sacrement. This last mentioned lane, shaded on one side by the trees of the convent garden, was bordered on the other by the high, dark wall of a house, the front of which looked towards the Rue St. Claude.

This wall, resembling the visage of a cyclops, had only one eye, or if the reader like it better, only one window, and even that, covered with bars and grating, was horribly gloomy.

Just below this window, which was never opened, as one might perceive from the spider's-webs that curtained it over, was a door studded with large nails, which indicated, not that the house was entered, but that it might be entered, on this side.

There were no dwellings in this lane, and only two inhabitants. These were a cobbler in a wooden box, and

a stocking-mender in a cask, both shading themselves from the heat under the acacias of the convent garden which threw their broad shadow on the dusty lane from nine in the morning. In the evening the stocking-mender returned to her domicile, the cobbler put a padlock on his castle, and no guardian watched over the lonely street, save the stern and sombre eye of the window we have spoken of.

Besides the door just mentioned, the house which we have undertaken to describe so accurately had another and the principal entrance in the Rue St. Claude. This entrance was a large gateway surmounted with carved figures in relief, which recalled the architecture of the times of Louis XIII., and was adorned with the griffin's head for a knocker which the Count de Fenix had indicated to the Cardinal de Rohan as distinguishing his abode.

As for the windows, they looked on the boulevard, and were opened early in the morning to admit the fresh air. But as Paris, at that period, and above all in that quarter, was far from safe, it occasioned no astonishment to see them grated, and the walls near them bristling with iron spikes. Indeed, the first storey of the house, at the first glance, suggested the idea of a fortress. Against enemies, thieves, or lovers, it presented iron balconies with sharp points; a deep moat separated the building from the boulevard, and to obtain entrance on this side it would have required ladders at least thirty feet long, for the wall which enclosed, or rather buried, the courtyard was fully that height.

This house, before which in the present day a spectator would be arrested by curiosity on beholding its singular aspect, was not very remarkable in 1770. On the contrary, it seemed to harmonise with the quarter of the city in which it stood, and if the worthy inhabitants of the Rue St. Louis, and the not less worthy denizens of the Rue St. Claude, shunned its neighbourhood, it was not on account of its reputation, which was then intact, but on

account of the lonely boulevard of the Porte St. Louis, and the Pont aux Choux, both of which were in very bad odour with the Parisians. In fact, the boulevard on this side led to nothing but the Bastille, and as there were not more than a dozen houses in the space of a quarter of a league, the city authorities had not thought it worth their while to light such a desert region. The consequence was that after eight o'clock in summer, and four in winter, the vacuum became a sort of chaos, with the agreeable addition of robbers.

It was, however, on this very boulevard, towards nine o'clock in the evening, and about three quarters of an hour after the visit to St. Denis, that a carriage drove rapidly along; it bore the coat of arms of the Count de Fenix on its panels. The count himself, mounted on Djerid, who whisked his long and silky tail as he snuffed the stifling atmosphere, rode about twenty paces in advance. Within it, resting on cushions, and concealed by the closed blinds, lay Lorenza fast asleep. The gate opened, as if by enchantment, at the noise of the wheels, and the carriage, after turning into the dark gulf of the Rue St. Claude, disappeared in the courtyard of the house we have just described, the gate of which seemed to close behind it without the aid of human hands.

There was most assuredly no occasion for so much mystery, since no one was there to see the Count de Fenix return, or to interfere with him had he carried off in his carriage the treasures of the Abbey of St. Denis.

In the mean time we shall say a few words respecting the interior of this house, of which it is of importance that our readers should know something, since it is our intention to introduce them to it more than once.

In the courtyard of which we have spoken, and in which the springing grass laboured by a never-ceasing effort to displace the pavement, were seen on the right the stables, on the left the coach-houses, while at the back a double flight of twelve steps led to the entrance door.

On the ground-floor, the house, or at least as much of it as was accessible, consisted of a large ante-chamber, a dining-room, remarkable for the quantity of massive plate heaped on its sideboards, and a salon, which seemed quite recently furnished, probably for the reception of its new inmates.

From the ante-chamber a broad staircase led to the first floor, which contained three principal apartments. A skilful geometrician, however, on measuring with his eye the extent of the house outside, and observing the space within it, would have been surprised to find it contain so little accommodation. In fact, in the outside apparent house there was a second hidden house, known only to those who inhabited it.

In the ante-chamber, close beside a statue of the god Harpocrates,—who, with his finger on his lips, seemed to enjoin the silence of which he is the symbol,—was concealed a secret door opening with a spring, and masked by the ornaments of the architecture. This door gave access to a staircase which, ascending to about the same height as the first floor on the other staircase, led to a little apartment lighted by two grated windows looking on an inner court. This inner court was the box, as it were, which enclosed the second house and concealed it from all eyes.

The apartment to which this staircase led was evidently intended for a man. Beside the bed, and before the sofas and couches, were spread instead of carpets the most magnificent furs which the burning climes of Africa and India produced. There were skins of lions, tigers, and panthers, with their glaring eyes and threatening teeth. The walls, hung with Cordova leather stamped in large and flowing arabesques, were decorated with weapons of every kind,—from the tomahawk of the Huron to the kris or the Malay; from the sword of the crusader to the kandjiar of the Arab; from the arquebuse, incrusted with ivory, of the sixteenth century, to the damasked barre,

inlaid with gold of the eighteenth. The eye in vain sought in this room for any other outlet than that from the staircase; perhaps there were several, but, if so, they were concealed and invisible.

A German domestic, about five-and-twenty or thirty years of age, the only human being who had been seen wandering to and fro in that vast mansion for several days, bolted the gate of the courtyard; and, opening the carriage-door whilst the stolid coachman unharnessed his horses, he lifted out Lorenza in his arms and carried her into the ante-chamber. There he laid her on a table, covered with red cloth, and drew down her long white veil over her person.

Then he left the room to light at the lamps of the carriage a large chandelier with seven branches, and returned with all its lights burning. But in that interval, short as it was, Lorenza had disappeared.

The Count de Fenix had followed close behind the German, and had no sooner been left alone with Lorenza than he took her in his arms and carried her, by the secret staircase we have described, to the chamber of arms, after having carefully closed both the doors behind him. Once there, he pressed his foot on a spring in the corner of the lofty mantelpiece, and immediately a door, which formed the back of the fireplace, rolled back on its noiseless hinges, and the count with his burden again disappeared, carefully closing behind him with his foot the mysterious door.

At the back of the mantelpiece was a second staircase, consisting of a flight of fifteen steps covered with Utrecht velvet, after mounting which he reached a chamber elegantly hung with satin, embroidered with flowers, of such brilliant colours and so naturally designed that they might have been taken for real. The furniture was richly gilt. Two cabinets of tortoise-shell inlaid with brass, a harpsichord, and a toilet-table of rose-wood, a beautiful bed, with transparent curtains, and several vases of Sèvres

porcelain, formed the principal articles; whilst chairs and couches, arranged with the nicest order in a space of thirty feet square, served to complete the decoration of the apartment, to which was attached a dressing-closet and a boudoir. These latter had no windows; but lamps filled with perfumed oil burned in them day and night, and, let down from the ceiling, were trimmed by invisible hands. The sleeping-chamber, however, had two windows hung with rich and heavy curtains; but as it was now night, the curtains had nothing to conceal.

Not a sound, not a breath was heard in this chamber, and an inhabitant might have thought himself a hundred miles from the world. But gold, cunningly wrought, shone on every side; beautiful paintings smiled from the walls; and lustres of coloured Bohemian glass glittered and sparkled like eyes looking on the scene, when, after having placed Lorenza on a sofa, the count, not satisfied with the trembling radiance of the boudoir, proceeded to light the rose-coloured wax-candles of two candelabra on the chimneypiece.

Then, returning to Lorenza, and placing himself before her, he knelt with one knee on a pile of cushions, and exclaimed softly, "Lorenza!"

The young girl, at this appeal, raised herself on her elbow, although her eyes remained closed. But she did not reply.

"Lorenza," he repeated, "do you sleep in your ordinary sleep, or in the magnetic sleep?"

"In the magnetic sleep," she answered.

"Then, if I question you, you can reply?"

"I think so."

The Count de Fenix was silent for a moment, then he continued: —

"Look in the apartment of the Princess Louise, whom we left three quarters of an hour ago."

"I am looking."

"What do you see?"

“The princess is praying before retiring to bed.”

“Do you see the Cardinal de Rohan in the convent?”

“No.”

“In any of the corridors or courts?”

“No.”

“Look whether his carriage be at the gate?”

“I do not see it.”

“Pursue the road by which we came. Do you see carriages on it?”

“Yes, several.”

“Do you see the cardinal’s among them?”

“No.”

“Come nearer Paris — now?”

“Now I see it.”

“Where?”

“At the gate of the city.”

“Has it stopped?”

“Yes, the footman has just got down.”

“Does the cardinal speak to him?”

“Yes, he is going to speak.”

“Lorenza, attend! It is important that I should know what the cardinal says.”

“You should have told me to listen in time. But, stop! — the footman is speaking to the coachman.”

“What does he say?”

“‘The Rue St. Claude, in the Marais, by the boulevard.’”

“Thanks, Lorenza”

The count wrote some words on a piece of paper, which he folded round a plate of copper, doubtless to give it weight, then he pulled a bell, pressed a spring, and a small opening appearing in the wall, he dropped the note down. The opening closed again instantly. It was in this way that the count, in the inner apartments of his house, gave his orders to Fritz, his German servant. Then turning to Lorenza, “Thanks,” said he, again.

“You are then satisfied with me?” asked the young woman.

“Yes, dear Lorenza.”

“Well, then, reward me.”

Balsamo smiled, and pressed his lips to Lorenza’s, whose whole body quivered at the touch.

“Oh, Joseph, Joseph,” she murmured, with a sigh almost of pain, “Joseph, how I love you!” And the young woman reached out both her arms to press Balsamo to her heart.

CHAPTER LVI.

THE DOUBLE EXISTENCE. — SLEEP.

BALSAMO evaded her grasp, and her arms, encountering only empty air, fell back crossed over her breast.

“Lorenza,” said Balsamo, “will you talk with your friend?”

“Oh, yes,” she replied. “But speak yourself the most; I love so to hear your voice.”

“Lorenza, you have often said that you would be happy if you could live with me, shut out from all the world.”

“Yes, that would be happiness indeed!”

“Well, your wish is realised. No one can follow us to this chamber; no one can enter here. We are alone, quite alone.”

“Ah, so much the better.”

“Tell me, is this apartment to your taste?”

“Order me to see it, then.”

“I order you.”

“Oh, what a charming room!”

“You are pleased with it, then?” asked the count, tenderly.

“Oh, yes! There are my favourite flowers,—my vanilla heliotropes, my crimson roses, my Chinese jessamines! Thanks, my sweet Joseph; how kind and good you are!”

“I do all I can to please you, Lorenza.”

“Oh! you do a hundred times more than I deserve.”

“You think so?”

“Yes.”

“Then you confess that you have been very ill-natured?”

“Very ill-natured? Oh, yes. But you forgive me, do you not?”

“I shall forgive you when you explain to me the strange mystery which I have sought to fathom ever since I knew you.”

“It is this, Balsamo. There are in me two Lorenzas, quite distinct from each other,—one that loves, and one that hates you. So there are in me two lives; in one I taste all the joys of paradise, in the other experience all the torments of hell.”

“And those two lives are sleep and waking?”

“Yes.”

“You love me when you sleep, and you hate me when you are awake?”

“Yes.”

“But why so?”

“I do not know.”

“You must know.”

“No.”

“Search carefully; look within yourself; sound your own heart.”

“Yes, I see the cause now.”

“What is it?”

“When Lorenza awakes, she is the Roman girl, the superstitious daughter of Italy; she thinks science a crime, and love a sin. Her confessor told her that they were so. She is then afraid of you, and would flee from you to the confines of the earth.”

“And when Lorenza sleeps?”

“Ah! then she is no longer the Roman, no longer superstitious; she is a woman. Then she reads Balsamo’s heart and mind,—she sees that his heart loves her, that his genius contemplates sublime things; then she feels her littleness compared with him; then she would live and die beside him, that the future might whisper softly the name of Lorenza, when it trumpets forth that of Cagliostro!”

“It is by that name, then, that I shall become celebrated?”

“Yes, by that name.”

“Dear Lorenza! Then you will love this new abode, will you not?”

“It is much more splendid than any of those you have already given me, but it is not on that account that I shall love it.”

“For what, then?”

“I shall love it because you have promised to live in it with me.”

“Then, when you sleep you see clearly that I love you; ardently love you?”

The young girl smiled faintly. “Yes,” said she, “I do see that you love me; and yet,” added she, with a sigh, “there is something which you love better than Lorenza.”

“What is it?” asked Balsamo, starting.

“Your dream.”

“Say, my task.”

“Your ambition.”

“Say, my glory.”

“Ah, Heaven! Ah, Heaven!” and the young girl’s breast heaved, while the tears forced their way through her closed eyelids.

“What do you see?” asked Balsamo, with alarm; for there were moments when her powers of seeing the unseen startled even him.

“Oh, I see darkness, and phantoms gliding through it; some of them hold in their hands their crowned heads, and you — you are among them, like a general in the thick of the battle! You command, and they obey.”

“Well,” said Balsamo, joyfully, “and does that not make you proud of me?”

“Oh, you are so good, you do not need to be great. Besides, I seek my own figure amid the throng which surrounds you, and I cannot see myself. I shall not be there,” murmured she, sadly. “I shall not be there.”

“Where will you be, then?”

"I shall be dead."

Balsamo shuddered.

"Dead? my Lorenza!" cried he, "dead? No, no!—we shall live long together to love one another."

"You love me not."

"Oh, yes!"

"Not enough, at any rate, not enough!" cried she, clasping Joseph's head with both hands, kissing his forehead passionately, again and again.

"With what do you reproach me?"

"With your coldness. See, you evade my caresses! Do my lips burn you, that you try to avoid my kisses? Oh, give me back my girlhood's peace, my convent at Subiaco, the nights I passed in my lonely cell! Again give me the kisses which you used to send me on mysterious wings of air, and which, sleeping, I saw before me, like sylphs coming on wings of gold and which filled my soul with rapture!"

"Lorenza, Lorenza!"

"Oh, I entreat you, Balsamo, do not avoid me; do not leave me! Give me your hand to press, your eyes to kiss; truly I am your wife!"

"Yes, yes, my loved Lorenza; yes, you are my dear wife!"

"And you allow me to remain near you, useless and forsaken. You have a chaste and solitary flower whose perfume calls to you, and yet you decline it. Ah," continued she, "I feel that I am nothing to you."

"You, my Lorenza, nothing? You are my all, my strength, my power, my genius! Without you I should be nothing. You possess my whole soul; is not that enough to make you happy?"

"Happy?" repeated she, contemptuously; "do you call this life of ours happy?"

"Yes, for in my mind to be happy is to be great."

She sighed deeply.

"Oh, could you but know, dearest Lorenza, how I love

to read the uncovered hearts of men, and govern them with their own passions!"

"Yes, I serve you in that, I know."

"That is not all. Your eyes read for me the hidden book of the future. What I could not learn with twenty years of toil and suffering, you, my gentle dove, innocent and pure, you teach me when you wish. Foes dog my steps, and lay snares for me; you inform me of every danger. On my understanding depend my life, my fortune, my freedom; you give that understanding the eye of the lynx, which dilates and sees clearly in the darkness. Your lovely eyes, closing to the light of this outward world, open to supernatural splendours which they watch for me. It is you who make me free, rich, powerful."

"And you, in return, make me wretched," she exclaimed, abandoning herself to her emotions; and, more impetuously than before, she threw both arms around Balsamo, who, himself, charged with the same electric current, made only a feeble resistance. However, he exerted his will power and unwound the living chain which held him in its clasp.

"Lorenza, Lorenza," he cried, "for pity's sake —"

"I am your wife, not your daughter; give me the love of a husband for his wife, and not that with which my father loved me!"

"Lorenza," said Balsamo, trembling himself with passion, "do not, I beseech you, ask of me a love other than I can give you."

"But," cried she, raising her arms in despair, "that is not love."

"Yes, it is," he replied, "a holy and pure love; it is that with which one should love a maiden."

The young woman made a sudden gesture, and her long, dark hair fell down, her white arms were extended with a motion almost threatening toward the count.

"And what happiness attends it? Why did you force me from my country, my name, my family; why obtain

this power over me; why make me your slave, if I am still to be called the virgin Lorenza?"

Balsamo sighed in his turn, overcome by this sorrowing woman's grief. "Alas," said he, "it is your fault, or rather that of Heaven. Why are you like an angel, infallible in penetration, by whose help I can subject the universe? Why are you able to read all hearts within their corporeal dwelling, as others read a book behind a pane of glass? It is because you are an angel of purity, Lorenza; it is because you are a diamond without blemish; it is because there are no shadows in your soul; it is because God, seeing your spotless form, pure and radiant as that of the Holy Mother, would have descend upon you at my call, in the name of the forces He Himself has made, His Holy Spirit, which, usually placed far above common, sordid souls, cannot find in them a resting-place, free from defilement. As a virgin, you are a seer, my Lorenza; as a wife you would be only matter."

"And thus you regard my love less than the vain chimeras of your brain? And you condemn me to a state of virgin chastity, while, when you are with me, I feel such ardent love. Oh, Joseph, Joseph," added she, passionately, "you wrong me cruelly!"

"Not so, for I love you; but I would raise you with myself to the throne of the world."

"Oh, Balsamo," murmured she, "will your ambition ever make you happy as my love would?"

Overcome at length, Balsamo let his head rest on Lorenza's breast.

"Oh, yes, yes," cried she, "at last I perceive you love me more than your ambition, than your power, than your aspirations; now, indeed, you love me, even as I love you."

Balsamo tried to shake off the intoxicating cloud that was beginning to envelop his brain; but his attempt was useless.

"Oh, then, if you really love me, spare me," said he.

Lorenza no longer heard him; she made with her arms one of those invincible chains, more binding than clamps of steel and more solid than the diamond.

“I will give you whatever love you wish,” said she, — “that of a sister or a wife, a virgin or a spouse; but give me a kiss, only a kiss.”

Balsamo was completely overcome; so much love over-powered him. No longer resisting her glowing eyes, her heaving breast, her bowed head, he drew near Lorenza, attracted as strongly as is iron by the magnet. His lips touched those of the young woman. Suddenly his reason asserted itself; he struggled to release himself, beat back the air loaded with the magnetic fluid, and at length exclaimed, “Lorenza, awake! Awake! — it is my will.”

At once her arms released their hold; the smile which had played on her lips died away, and she sighed heavily. At length her closed eyes opened; the dilated pupils assumed their natural size; she stretched out her arms, appeared overcome with weariness, and fell back at full length, but awake, on the sofa.

Balsamo, seated at a little distance from her, heaved a deep sigh. “Adieu, my dream!” murmured he to himself. “Farewell, happiness.”

CHAPTER LVII.

THE DOUBLE EXISTENCE. — WAKING.

As soon as Lorenza had recovered her natural powers of sight, she cast a hurried glance around her. Her eyes roamed over all the splendid trifles which surrounded her on every side, without exhibiting any appearance of the pleasure which such things usually give to women.

At length they rested with a shudder on Balsamo, who was seated at a short distance, and was watching her attentively.

“You again!” said she, recoiling; and all the symptoms of horror appeared in her countenance. Her lips turned deadly pale, and the perspiration stood in large drops on her forehead. Balsamo did not reply.

“Where am I?” she asked.

“You know whence you come, madame,” said Balsamo; “and that should naturally enable you to guess where you are.”

“Yes, you are right to remind me of that,—I remember now. I know that I have been persecuted by you, pursued by you, torn by you from the arms of the royal lady whom I had chosen to protect me.”

“Then you must know, also, that this princess, all-powerful though she be, could not defend you.”

“Yes, you have conquered her by some work of magic!” cried Lorenza, clasping her hands. “O Heaven, deliver me from this demon!”

“In what way do I resemble a demon, madame?” said Balsamo, shrugging his shoulders. “Once for all, abandon,

I beg of you, this farrago of childish prejudices which you brought with you from Rome; have done with all those absurd superstitions which you learned in your convent, and which have formed your constant travelling companions since you left it."

"Oh, my convent! Who will restore me my convent?" cried Lorenza, bursting into tears.

"In fact," said Balsamo, ironically, "a convent is a place very much to be regretted."

Lorenza darted towards one of the windows, drew aside the curtains, and, opening it, stretched out her hand. It struck against a thick bar supporting an iron grating, which, although hidden by flowers, was not the less efficacious in retaining a prisoner.

"Prison for prison," said she, "I like that better which conducts towards heaven than that which sends to hell." And she dashed her delicate hands against the iron bars.

"If you were more reasonable, Lorenza, you would find only the flowers, without the bars, at your windows."

"Was I not reasonable when you shut me up in that other moving prison, with that vampire whom you call Althotas? And yet you kept me a prisoner, you watched me like a lynx; and whenever you left me, you breathed into me that spirit which takes possession of me, and which I cannot overcome. Where is he, that horrible old man, whose sight freezes me with terror? In some corner here, is he not? Let us keep silent, and we shall hear his unearthly voice issue from the depths of the earth."

"You really give way to your imagination like a child, madame. Althotas, my teacher, my friend, my second father, is an inoffensive old man, who has never seen or approached you; or, if he has seen you, has never paid the least attention to you, immersed as he is in his task."

"His task?" murmured Lorenza. "And what is his task, pray?"

"He is trying to discover the elixir of life, — what all the greatest minds have been in search of for the last six thousand years."

“And you — what are you trying to discover?”

“The means of human perfectibility.”

“Oh, demons! demons!” said Lorenza, raising her hands to heaven.

“Ah!” said Balsamo, rising, “now your fit is coming on again.”

“My fit?”

“Yes, your fit. There is one thing, Lorenza, which you are not aware of, — it is that your life is divided into two equal periods. During one you are gentle, good, and reasonable; during the other you are mad.”

“And it is under this false pretext of madness that you shut me up?”

“Alas! I am obliged to do so.”

“Oh, be cruel, barbarous, pitiless, if you will; shut me up, kill me; but do not play the hypocrite; do not pretend to compassionate whilst you destroy me!”

“But only reflect a moment,” said Balsamo, without anger, and even with a caressing smile; “is it torture to live in an elegant, commodious apartment like this?”

“Grated windows; iron bars on all sides,— no air, no air.”

“The bars are for the safety of your life, I repeat, Lorenza.”

“Oh!” cried she, “he destroys me piecemeal, and tells me he cares for my life!”

Balsamo approached the young girl, and with a friendly gesture, endeavoured to take her hand; but, recoiling as if from the touch of a serpent, —

“Oh! do not touch me!” said she.

“Do you hate me, then, Lorenza?”

“Ask the sufferer if he hates his executioner.”

“Lorenza! Lorenza! it is because I do not wish to be your executioner that I deprive you of a little of your liberty. If you could go and come as you liked, who knows what you might do in the moments of your madness?”

“What I might do? Oh, let me once be free, and you shall see what I would do!”

“Lorenza, you treat the husband whom you have chosen in the sight of Heaven very unkindly.”

“I chose you? Never! never!”

“You are my wife, notwithstanding.”

“Yes, that indeed must have been the work of the demon.”

“Poor insensate!” said Balsamo, with a tender look.

“But I am a Roman woman,” murmured Lorenza; “and one day I shall be revenged.”

Balsamo shook his head gently.

“You only say that to frighten me, Lorenza, do you not?” said he, smiling.

“No, no; I shall do what I say.”

“Woman!” exclaimed Balsamo, with a commanding voice, “you pretend to be a Christian; does not your religion teach you to render good for evil? What hypocrisy is yours, calling yourself a follower of that religion, and vowing to yourself to render evil for good!”

Lorenza appeared for an instant struck by these words. “Oh!” said she, “it is not vengeance to denounce to society its enemies; it is a duty.”

“If you denounce me as a necromancer, as a sorcerer, it is not society whom I offend, but God; but if I be such, the Deity, by a sign, can destroy me. He does not do so. Does He leave my punishment to weak men, subject to error like myself?”

“He bears with you,” murmured the young girl; “He waits for you to reform.”

Balsamo smiled.

“And in the mean time,” said he, “He counsels you to betray your friend, your benefactor, your husband?”

“My husband? Ah! thank Heaven, your hand has never touched mine that I have not blushed or shuddered at its contact.”

“And you know I have always tried to spare you that contact.”

“It is true, you are chaste; it is the only amelioration

CHAPTER LVIII,

THE VISIT.

LORENZA was not mistaken. A carriage, after having entered Paris by the Barrière St. Denis, and traversing the faubourg of that name throughout its entire length, had turned the angle formed by the last house and the Porte St. Denis, and was rapidly advancing along the boulevard.

This carriage contained Monsieur Louis de Rohan, Bishop of Strasburg, whose impatience led him to anticipate the time fixed upon for seeking the sorcerer in his den.

The coachman, a man of mettle, and well accustomed to aid the handsome prelate in his gallant adventures amidst the darkness and perils of certain mysterious streets, was by no means discouraged, when, after having passed the boulevards of St. Denis and St. Martin, still thronged with people and well lighted, he received the order to proceed along the lonely and dismal boulevard of the Bastille. The carriage stopped at the corner of the Rue St. Claude, on the boulevard itself, and, after a whispered order from its master, took up a concealed position under the trees about twenty paces off.

Then Monsieur de Rohan, who was dressed in the ordinary costume of a civilian, glided down the street and knocked at the door of the house, which he easily recognised by the description of it given to him by the Count de Fenix.

Fritz's footsteps echoed in the courtyard, and the door was opened.

"Is it not here that the Count de Fenix resides?" asked the prince.

“Yes, monseigneur.”

“Is he at home?”

“Yes, monseigneur.”

“Well, say that a gentleman wishes to see him.”

“His Eminence the Cardinal de Rohan, is it not?” asked Fritz.

The prince stood perfectly confounded. He looked all around him, and at his dress, to see whether anything in his retinue or costume had revealed his rank; but he was alone, and in the dress of a layman.

“How do you know my name?” said he.

“My master has just told me, this very instant, that he expected your Eminence.”

“Yes, but to-morrow, or the day after?”

“No, monseigneur, this evening.”

“Your master told you that he expected me this evening?”

“Yes, monseigneur.”

“Very well; announce me, then,” said the cardinal, putting a double louis-d’or into Fritz’s hand.

“In that case,” said Fritz, “will your Eminence have the goodness to follow me?”

The cardinal made a gesture in the affirmative.

Fritz then advanced with a rapid step towards the antechamber, which was lighted by a massive bronze candelabrum, containing twelve wax tapers. The cardinal followed, surprised and thoughtful.

“My friend,” said he, stopping at the door of the salon, “there must be a mistake, I think, and in that case I do not wish to intrude on the count. It is impossible that he can expect me, for he was not aware that I intended to come to-night.”

“Monseigneur is the Prince-Cardinal de Rohan, Bishop of Strasburg, is he not?” inquired Fritz.

“Yes, my friend.”

“Well, then, it is monseigneur whom my master the count expects.”

And lighting successively the candles of two other candelabra in the salon, Fritz bowed and retired.

Five minutes elapsed, during which the cardinal, agitated by a strange emotion, gazed at the elegant furniture of this salon, and at the eight pictures by the first masters which hung from the walls. The door opened, and the Count de Fenix appeared on the threshold.

“Good evening, monseigneur!” said he, simply.

“I am told that you expected me,” exclaimed the cardinal, without replying to this salutation,—“that you expected me this evening. It is impossible!”

“I beg your pardon, monseigneur, but I did expect you,” replied the count. “Perhaps you doubt the truth of my words on seeing the poor reception I give you. But I have only very lately arrived in Paris, and can scarcely call myself installed here yet; your Eminence must, therefore, be good enough to excuse me.”

“You expected me! But who could have told you that I was coming?”

“Yourself, monseigneur.”

“How so?”

“Did you not stop your carriage at the Barrière St. Denis?”

“Yes.”

“Did you not summon your footman to the carriage-door, and give him the order, ‘Rue St. Claude, in the Marais, by the Faubourg St. Denis and the boulevard,’—words which he repeated to the coachman?”

“Yes, certainly; but you must have seen me and heard me.”

“I did see and hear you, monseigneur.”

“Then you were there?”

“No, monseigneur, I was not there.”

“And where were you?”

“I was here.”

“You saw me and heard me from this?”

“Yes, monseigneur.”

“Come, come!”

“Monseigneur forgets that I am a sorcerer.”

“Ah, true, I did forget that! But, monsieur, what am I to call you,—the Baron Balsamo, or the Count de Fenix?”

“In my own house, monseigneur, I have no name; I am called THE MASTER.”

“Yes, that is the hermetical title. So, then, master, you expected me?”

“I did expect you.”

“And your laboratory is heated?”

“My laboratory is always heated, monseigneur.”

“And you will permit me to enter it?”

“I shall have the honour of conducting your Eminence there.”

“And I shall follow you, but only on one condition.”

“What is that?”

“That you promise not to place me personally in contact with the devil. I am terribly afraid of his Majesty Lucifer.”

“Oh, monseigneur!”

“Yes; for in general you employ for such a purpose the greatest rogues unhung,—discarded soldiers of the guards, or fencing-masters without pupils, who, in order to play the part of Satan naturally, treat their dupes to sundry fillips and tweaks of the nose, after first putting out the lights.”

“Monseigneur,” said Balsamo, smiling, “my devils never forget that they have the honour of dealing with princes, and ever bear in mind the Prince de Condé’s speech to one of them who would not keep still,—namely, that if he did not conduct himself more decently, he would so rub him down with an oaken towel that he should never need washing again.”

“I am delighted to hear that you manage your imps so well. Let us proceed to the laboratory, then.”

“Will your Eminence have the goodness to follow me?”

“Proceed!”

CHAPTER LIX.

GOLD.

THE Cardinal de Rohan and Balsamo wound along a narrow staircase which ran parallel with the great staircase, and, like it, led to the apartments on the first floor. There, in a vaulted apartment, appeared a door, which Balsamo opened, and a very gloomy corridor was disclosed to the cardinal's view, who entered it resolutely.

Balsamo closed the door behind them. At the noise which this door made in closing, the cardinal looked back with a slight feeling of trepidation.

"Monseigneur," said Balsamo, "we have now arrived. We have but one more door to open and close; but let me warn you not to be alarmed at the sound it will make, for it is of iron."

The cardinal, who had started at the sound of the first door, was glad to be thus prepared in time, for otherwise the grating noise of its hinges and lock wquld have jarred disagreeably on nerves even less susceptible than his.

They descended three steps and entered the laboratory.

The first aspect of this new apartment was that of a large room with the beams and joists of the ceiling left in their original state, and containing a huge lamp with a shade, several books, and a great number of chemical and other philosophical instruments.

After a few seconds the cardinal began to feel that he breathed with difficulty.

"What is the meaning of this?" said he. "I am stifling here, master; the perspiration pours from my forehead. What noise is that?"

"Behold the cause, monseigneur," said Balsamo, drawing back a large curtain of asbestos cloth, and disclosing to view an immense brick furnace, in the centre of which two holes glared in the darkness like the gleaming eyes of a panther.

This furnace was situated in the middle of a second apartment, double the size of the first, which the prince had not perceived, hidden as it was by the asbestos curtain.

"Ah, ha!" cried the prince, retreating two or three steps, "that looks a little alarming."

It is a furnace, monseigneur."

"Yes, but this furnace of yours has a very diabolical sort of a look. What are you cooking in it?"

"What your Eminence asked from me."

"What I asked from you?"

"Yes. I think your Eminence said you wished for a specimen of my handiwork. I had not intended beginning the operation till to-morrow evening, as you were not to visit me till the day following; but your Eminence having changed your intention, as soon as I heard you set out for my abode, I kindled the furnace and put in the ingredients for amalgamation; so that now the furnace is boiling, and in ten minutes you will have your gold. Permit me to open this ventilator to give a current of fresh air."

"What! those crucibles on the furnace —."

"Will in ten minutes give your Highness gold as pure as that of the sequins of Venice, or the florins of Tuscany."

"I should like to see it, if it is at all practicable."

"Certainly. But you must use some necessary precautions."

"What precautions?"

"Cover your face with this mask of asbestos with glass eyes; otherwise your sight might be injured by the glowing heat."

"*Peste!* I must take care of that. I attach a good deal

of value to my eyes, and would not give them for the hundred thousand crowns which you have promised me."

"I thought so, for your Eminence's eyes are very fine."

This compliment was by no means displeasing to the cardinal, who was not a little vain of his person.

"Ha!" said he, putting on his mask, "so it seems we are to see what gold is."

"I trust so, monseigneur."

"Gold, to the value of one hundred thousand crowns?"

"Yes, monseigneur, perhaps even a little more; for I made a very abundant mixture."

"Upon my honour, you are a most generous sorcerer," said the prince, with a joyous palpitation of the heart.

"Less so than your Highness, who so kindly compliments me. In the mean time, monseigneur, may I beg you to keep back a little whilst I take off the lid of the crucible?"

And Balsamo, having put on a short shirt of asbestos, seized with a vigorous arm a pair of iron pincers, and raised the cover, now red hot, which revealed to view four crucibles of a similar form, some containing a mixture of a vermillion colour, others a whitish matter, although still retaining something of a purple, transparent hue.

"And that is gold?" said the prelate in a half whisper, as if he feared to disturb the mystery which was being accomplished before him.

"Yes, monseigneur. These four crucibles contain the substance in different stages, some of them having been subject to the process twelve, others only eleven hours. The mixture—and this is a secret which I reveal only to a friend of the hermetic science—is thrown into the matter at the moment of ebullition. But, as your Eminence may see, the first crucible is now at a white heat; it has reached the proper stage, and it is time to pour it out. Be good enough to keep back, monseigneur."

The prince obeyed with the promptitude of a soldier at the command of his captain, and Balsamo, laying aside the

pincers already heated by contact with the crucibles, rolled forward to the furnace a sort of movable anvil, in which were hollowed eight cylindrical moulds of equal calibre.

“What is this, my dear sorcerer?” asked the prince.

“This, monseigneur, is the mould in which your ingots are to be cast.”

“Ah, ha!” exclaimed the cardinal, and he redoubled his attention.

Balsamo spread over the floor a thick layer of white tow as a sort of protection against accidents; then, placing himself between the furnace and the anvil, he opened a huge book, and, wand in hand, repeated a solemn incantation. This ended, he seized an enormous pair of tongs intended for grasping the weighty crucibles.

“The gold will be splendid, monseigneur,” said he; “of the very finest quality.”

“What! Are you going to lift off that flaming pot?”

“Which weighs fifty pounds? Yes, monseigneur; few founders, I may say it without boasting, possess my muscles and my dexterity. Fear nothing, therefore.”

“But if the crucible were to break?”

“Yes, that happened with me once, monseigneur,—in the year 1399. I was making an experiment with Nicolas Flamel, in his house in the Rue des Ecrivains, near the church of St. Jacques-la-Boucherie. Poor Flamel was near losing his life; and I lost eighteen pounds of a substance even more precious than gold.”

“What the devil is that you are saying, master?”

“The truth.”

“Do you mean to make me believe that you pursued the *great work* in 1399, along with Nicolas Flamel?”

“Precisely so, monseigneur. We found out the secret together, about fifty or sixty years before, when experimenting with Pierre le Bon in the town of Pola. He did not shut up the crucible quickly enough, and I lost the use of my right eye for nearly twelve years in consequence of the evaporation.”

"Pierre le Bon, who composed that famous book, the 'Margarita Pretiosa,' printed in 1330?"

"The very same, monseigneur."

"And you knew Pierre le Bon and Flamel?"

"I was the pupil of the one and the teacher of the other."

And whilst the terrified prelate asked himself whether the personage at his side was not the devil in person, and not one of his satellites, Balsamo plunged his long tongs into the furnace. The alchemist's grasp was sure and rapid; he seized the crucible about four inches from the top, satisfied himself, by raising it up a little, that his hold was firm; then, by a vigorous effort, which strained every muscle in his frame, he heaved up the terrible pot from the glowing furnace. The handle of the tongs turned glowing red immediately; then, rippling over the fused matter within, were seen white furrows like lightning streaking a black sulphureous cloud; then the edges of the crucible turned a brownish red, whilst the conical base appeared still rose-coloured and silver beneath the shade of the furnace; then the metal, on the surface of which had formed a violet-coloured scum, crusted here and there with gold, hissed over the mouth of the crucible, and fell flashing into the dark mould, around the top of which the golden wave, angry and foaming, seemed to insult the vile metal with which it was forced into contact.

"Now for the second," said Balsamo, seizing another crucible; and another mould was filled with the same strength and dexterity as the first. The perspiration poured from the operator's forehead; and the cardinal, standing back in the shade, crossed himself.

In fact, the scene was one of wild and majestic horror.

Balsamo, his features lighted by the reddish glare of the glowing metal, resembled one of the damned of Michael Angelo or Dante, writhing in the depths of their flaming cauldrons; while over all brooded the feeling of the mysterious and unknown.

Balsamo took no breathing time between the two operations; time pressed.

"There will be a slight loss," said he, after having filled the second mould. "I have allowed the mixture to boil the hundredth part of a minute too long."

"The hundredth part of a minute!" exclaimed the cardinal, no longer seeking to conceal his stupefaction.

"It is enormous in alchemy," replied Balsamo, quietly; "but in the mean time, your Eminence, here are two crucibles emptied, and two moulds filled with one hundred pounds' weight of pure gold."

And seizing the first mould with his powerful tongs, he plunged it into water, which hissed and bubbled around it for some time. Then he opened it and took out a lump of solid gold in the form of a sugar-loaf flattened at each extremity.

"We shall have some time to wait for the other crucibles," said Balsamo. "Will your Eminence in the mean time be seated, or would you prefer to breathe for a few moments a cooler atmosphere than this?"

"And that is really gold?" asked the cardinal, without replying to the operator's question.

Balsamo smiled. The cardinal was his.

"Do you doubt it, monseigneur?"

"Why — you know — science is so often mistaken —"

"Prince, your words do not express your whole meaning," said Balsamo. "You think that I am deceiving you, and deceiving you wittingly. Monseigneur, I should sink very low in my own opinion could I act such a part; for my ambition in that case would not extend beyond the walls of my cabinet, which you would leave filled with wonder, only to be undeceived on taking your ingot to the first goldsmith you should meet. Come, come, monseigneur, do not think so meanly of me; and be assured that if I wished to deceive you, I should do it more adroitly, and with a higher aim. However, your Eminence knows how to test gold?"

“Certainly; by the touchstone.”

“You have doubtless had occasion, monseigneur, to make the experiment yourself, were it only on Spanish doubloons, which are much esteemed in play because they are of the purest gold, but which, for that very reason, are frequently counterfeited.”

“In fact, I have done so before now.”

“Well, monseigneur, here are the stone and the acid.”

“By no means; I am quite convinced.”

“Monseigneur, do me the favour to assure yourself that these ingots are not only gold, but gold without alloy.”

The cardinal appeared unwilling to give this proof of his incredulity, and yet it was evident that he was not convinced. Balsamo himself tested the ingots, and showed the result of the experiment to his guest.

“Twenty-eight carats,” said he; “and now I may pour out the two others.”

Ten minutes afterwards the four ingots lay side by side on the tow, heated by their contact.

“Your Eminence came here in a carriage, did you not? At least when I saw you you were in one.”

“Yes.”

“If your Eminence will order it to the door, my servant shall put the ingots into it.”

“One hundred thousand crowns!” murmured the cardinal, as he took off his mask to feast his eyes on the gold lying at his feet.

“And as for this gold, your Eminence can tell whence it comes, having seen it made?”

“Oh, yes; I shall testify — ”

“Oh, no!” said Balsamo, hastily; “*savants* are not much in favour in France! Testify nothing, monseigneur. If instead of making gold I made theories, then, indeed, I should have no objection.”

“Then, what can I do for you?” said the prince, lifting an ingot of fifty pounds with difficulty in his delicate hands.

Balsamo looked at him steadily, and without the least respect began to laugh.

"What is there so very ludicrous in what I have said?" asked the cardinal.

"Your Eminence offers me your services, I think. Would it not be much more to the purpose were I to offer mine to you?"

The cardinal's brow darkened.

"You have obliged me, monsieur," said he, "and I am ready to acknowledge it; but if the gratitude I am to bear you proves a heavier burden than I imagined, I shall not accept the obligation. There are still, thank Heaven, usurers enough in Paris from whom I can procure, half on some pledge and half on my bond, one hundred thousand crowns the day after to morrow. My episcopal ring alone is worth forty thousand francs." And the prelate held out his hand, as white as a woman's, on which shone a diamond the size of a small nut.

"Prince," said Balsamo, bowing, "it is impossible that you can for a moment imagine that I meant to offend you." Then, as if speaking to himself, he proceeded: "It is singular that the truth should always produce this effect on those who bear the title of prince."

"What mean you?"

"Your Eminence proposes to serve me; now I merely ask you, monseigneur, of what nature could those services be which your Eminence proposes to render me?"

"Why, in the first place, my credit at court."

"Monseigneur, monseigneur, you know too well that that credit is much shaken; in fact, I should almost as soon take the Duke de Choiseul's, and yet he has not perhaps a fortnight to hold his place. Take my word for it, prince, as far as credit goes, depend on mine. There is good and sterling gold. Every time that your Eminence is in want of any, let me know the night before, and you shall have as much as you like. And with gold, monseigneur, cannot all things be procured?"

"Not all," murmured the cardinal, sinking into the grade of a *protégé*, and no longer even making an effort to regain that of patron.

"Ah! true. I forgot that your Eminence desires something more than gold, — something more precious than all the riches of the earth. But in this, science cannot assist you; it is the province of magic. Monseigneur, say the word, and the alchemist is ready to become the magician."

"Thank you, monsieur; but I want for nothing more; I desire nothing further," said the cardinal, in a desponding voice.

Balsamo approached him.

"Monseigneur," said he, "a prince, young, handsome, ardent, rich, and bearing the name of Rohan, ought not to make such a reply to a magician."

"Why not, monsieur?"

"Because the magician reads his heart, and knows the contrary."

"I wish for nothing; I desire nothing," repeated the cardinal, almost terrified.

"I should have thought, on the contrary, that your Eminence's wishes were such as you dared not avow, even to yourself, since they are those of a — king!"

"Monsieur," said the cardinal, with a start, "you allude, I presume, to a subject which you introduced before, when I saw you at St. Denis?"

"I confess it, monseigneur."

"Monsieur, you were mistaken then, and you are equally mistaken now."

"Do you forget, monseigneur, that I can read as plainly what is passing at this moment in your heart as, a short time ago, I saw your carriage enter the city, drive along the boulevard, and stop beneath the trees about fifty paces from my house?"

"Then explain yourself; tell me what you mean."

"Monseigneur, the princes of your family have always aimed at a high and daring passion; you have not degenerated from your race in that respect."

"I do not know what you mean, count," stammered the prince.

"On the contrary, you understand me perfectly. I could have touched many chords which vibrate in your heart, but why do so uselessly? I have touched the one which was necessary, and it vibrates deeply, I am certain."

The cardinal raised his head, and with a last effort at defiance met the clear and penetrating glance of Balsamo. Balsamo smiled with such an expression of superiority that the cardinal cast down his eyes.

"Oh! you are right, monseigneur, you are right; do not look at me, for then I read too plainly what passes in your heart, — that heart, which, like a mirror, gives back the form of the objects reflected in it."

"Silence, Count de Fenix! silence!" said the cardinal, completely subdued.

"Yes, you are right; it is better to be silent, for the moment has not yet come to let such a passion be seen."

"Not yet, did you say?"

"Not yet."

"Then that love may, in some future time, bear fruit?"

"Why not?"

"And can you tell me, then, if this love be not the love of a madman, as it often seems to myself, and as it ever will seem until I have a proof to the contrary?"

"You ask much, monseigneur. I can tell you nothing without being placed in contact with the person who inspires your love; or, at least, with something belonging to her person."

"What would be necessary?"

"A ringlet, however small, of her beautiful golden hair, for example."

"Yes, you are a man profoundly skilled in the human heart; you read it as I should read an open book."

"Alas! that is just what your great grand-uncle, the Chevalier Louis de Rohan, said to me when I bade him farewell on the platform of the Bastille, at the foot of the scaffold which he ascended so courageously!"

"He said that to you, — that you were profoundly skilled in the human heart?"

"Yes, and that I could read it; for I had forewarned him that the Chevalier de Préault would betray him. He would not believe me, and the Chevalier de Préault did betray him."

"But what a singular analogy you draw between my ancestor and myself!" said the cardinal, turning pale in spite of himself.

"I did so merely to remind you of the necessity of being prudent, monseigneur, in obtaining a tress of hair whose curling locks are surmounted by a crown."

"No matter how obtained; you shall have the tress, monsieur."

"It is well. In the mean time, here is your gold, monseigneur; I hope you no longer doubt its being really gold?"

"Give me a pen and paper."

"What for, monseigneur?"

"To give you a receipt for the hundred thousand crowns which you are so good as to lend me."

"A receipt to me, monseigneur? For what purpose?"

"I borrow often, my dear count; but I tell you beforehand, I never take gifts."

"As you please, prince."

The cardinal took a pen from the table, and wrote a receipt for the money in an enormous, illegible hand, and in a style of orthography which would shock a poor curate's housekeeper of the present day.

"Is that right?" asked he, as he handed it to Balsamo.

"Perfectly right," replied the count, putting it in his pocket without even looking at it.

"You have not read it, monsieur!"

"I have your Eminence's word; and the word of a Rohan is better than any pledge."

"Count de Fenix," said the cardinal, with a slight inclination, very significant from a man of his rank, "you speak

like a gentleman; and if I cannot lay you under any obligation to me, I am at least fortunate in being obliged to such a man."

Balsamo bowed in his turn, and rang a bell, at the sound of which Fritz appeared.

The count spoke a few words to him in German. He stooped, and like a child carrying a handful of oranges,—a little embarrassed, to be sure, but by no means oppressed with the burden,—he carried off the eight ingots wrapped up in tow.

"He is a perfect Hercules, that fellow!" said the cardinal.

"He is tolerably strong, indeed, monseigneur; but since he has been in my service, I give him every day three drops of an elixir compounded by my learned friend, the Doctor Althotas. So you see the rogue profits by it; in a year he will be able to carry a hundred weight with one hand."

"Wonderful! incomprehensible!" murmured the cardinal; "I shall never be able to resist speaking of all this!"

"Oh! speak of it by all means," replied Balsamo, laughing; "but remember that, by so doing, you bind yourself to come in person and extinguish the flame of the fagots, if by chance the parliament should take it in their heads to burn me alive in the Place de Grève."

And having escorted his illustrious visitor to the outer gate, Balsamo took leave of him with a respectful bow.

"But I do not see your servant?" said the cardinal.

"He has gone to carry the gold to your carriage, monseigneur."

"Does he know where it is?"

"Under the fourth tree to the right, on the boulevard; that was what I said to him in German, monseigneur."

The cardinal raised his hands in astonishment, and disappeared in the darkness.

Balsamo waited for Fritz's return, and then entered the house, closing all the doors carefully behind him.

CHAPTER LX.

THE ELIXIR OF LIFE.

BALSAMO being now alone, proceeded to listen at Lorenza's door; she was still sunk in a soft and gentle sleep. He half opened a wicket in the door, and contemplated her for some time in a sweet and tender reverie. Then, shutting the wicket, he crossed the apartment which we have described, and which separated Lorenza's apartment from the laboratory, and hastened to extinguish the fire in the furnace by throwing open an immense conduit, which allowed the heat to escape into the chimney, and at the same time gave passage to the water of a reservoir on the roof.

Then, carefully placing the cardinal's receipt in a black morocco case, —

“The word of a Rohan is good,” murmured he; “but for myself alone; and it is well that the brethren yonder should know how I employ their gold.”

As these words died away on his lips, three short, quick taps on the ceiling made him raise his head.

“Oh, oh!” said he, “there is Althotas calling me.”

Then, whilst he continued his task of giving air to the laboratory, and arranging everything in order, the taps were repeated louder than before.

“So he is getting impatient; it is a good sign.”

And Balsamo took a long iron rod and knocked on the ceiling in answer. He then proceeded to move an iron ring fixed in the wall; and by means of a spring, which was disclosed to view, a trap-door was detached from the ceiling and descended to the floor of the laboratory. Bal-



samo placed himself in the centre of this machine, which, by means of another spring, gently rose with its burden — with as much ease as in the opera the gods and goddesses are carried up to Elysium — and the pupil found himself in the presence of the master.

The new dwelling of the old alchemist might be about eight or nine feet high and sixteen in diameter; it was lighted from the top like a well, and hermetically closed on the four sides. This apartment, as the reader may observe, was a perfect palace when compared with his habitation in the vehicle.

The old man was seated in his arm-chair on wheels, in the centre of a marble table formed like a horse-shoe, and heaped up with a whole world, or rather a whole chaos, of plants, phials, tools, books, instruments, and papers covered with cabalistic characters.

He was so absorbed that he never raised his head when Balsamo appeared. The light of an astral lamp, suspended from the culminating point of the window in the roof, fell on his bald, shining head; he was turning to and fro in his fingers a small white bottle, the transparency of which he was trying before his eye, as a good housekeeper tries the eggs which she buys at market. Balsamo gazed on him at first in silence; then, after a moment's pause, —

“Well,” said he, “have you any news?”

“Yes, yes; come hither, Aeharat; you see me enchanted — transported with joy. I have found — I have found —”

“What?”

“*Pardieu!* what I sought.”

“Gold?”

“Gold, indeed! I am surprised at you!”

“The diamond?”

“Gold? diamonds? The man raves! A fine *discovery*, forsooth, to be rejoiced at!”

“Then what you have found is your elixir?”

“Yes, my son, yes! — the elixir of life! Life? — what do I say? — the eternity of life!”

"Oh!" said Balsamo, in a dejected voice (for he looked on this pursuit as mere insanity), "so it is that dream which occupies you still?"

But Althotas, without listening, continued to gaze delightedly at his phial.

"At last," said he, "the combination is complete; the elixir of Aristæus, twenty grams; balm of Mercury, fifteen grams; precipitate of gold, fifteen grams; essence of the cedar of Lebanon, twenty-five grams."

"But it seems to me that, with the exception of the elixir of Aristæus, this is precisely your last combination, master."

"Yes, but I had not then discovered one more ingredient, without which all the rest are as nothing."

"And have you discovered it now?"

"Yes."

"Can you procure it?"

"I should think so!"

"What is it?"

"We must add to the several ingredients already combined in this phial, the three last drops of the life-blood of an infant."

"Well, but where will you procure this infant?" said Balsamo, horror-struck.

"I trust to you for that."

"To me? You are mad, master!"

"Mad? And why?" asked the old man, perfectly unmoved at this charge, and licking with the utmost delight a drop of the fluid which had escaped from the cork of the phial and was trickling down the side.

"Why, for that purpose, you must kill the child."

"Of course, we must kill him; and the handsomer he is, the better."

"Impossible!" said Balsamo, shrugging his shoulders. "Here children are not taken in that way to be killed."

"Bah!" cried the old man, with hideous coolness, "and what do they do with them, then?"

“Pardieu! They rear them.”

“Oh! Then the world is changed lately. It is only three years since we were offered as many infants as we chose for four charges of powder and half a bottle of *eau-de-vie*.

“Was that in Congo, master?”

“Yes, yes, in Congo! It is quite the same to me whether the child be black or white. Those who were offered to us, I remember, were sweet, playful, curly-headed little things.”

“Ah! yes,” said Balsamo; “but, unfortunately, my dear master, we are not in Congo.”

“Oh! we are not in Congo?” said Althotas. “And where are we, then?”

“In Paris.”

“In Paris? Well, if we were to embark from Marseilles, we could be in Congo in six weeks.”

“Yes, no doubt. But I am obliged to remain in France.”

“You are obliged to remain in France? And why so, may I ask?”

“Because I have business here.”

“Business?”

“Yes, important business.”

The old man burst into a prolonged and ghastly laugh. “Business!” said he; “business in France! True, I forgot, you have your clubs to organise!”

“Yes, master.”

“Conspiracies to set on foot?”

“Yes, master.”

“And you call that business?” And the aged man again commenced to laugh, with an air of mockery and sarcasm. Balsamo remained silent, collecting his forces for the storm which was brewing, and which he felt approach.

“Well, and how is this business of yours getting on?” said the old man, turning with difficulty in his chair, and fixing his large grey eyes on his pupil.

Balsamo felt his glance pierce him like a ray of light.

"How far have I advanced?" asked he.

"Yes."

"I have thrown the first stone, and the waters are troubled."

"Troubled? And what slime have you stirred up, eh?"

"The best, — the slime of philosophy."

"Oh! so you are setting to work with your Utopias, your baseless visions, your fogs and mists! Fools! Ye discuss the existence or non-existence of God, instead of trying like me to make gods of yourselves. And who are these famous philosophers with whom you are connected? Let me hear."

"I have already gained over the greatest poet and the greatest atheist of the age; he is soon expected in France, whence he has been in a manner exiled, and he is to be made a freemason at the lodge which I have established in the old monastery of the Jesuits, in the Rue Pot-de-Fer."

"What is his name?"

"Voltaire."

"I never heard of him. Well, whom else have you?"

"I am very soon to have a conference with the man who has done more to overturn established ideas than any other in this age, — the man who wrote 'Le Contrat Social.'"

"What is he called?"

"Rousseau."

"I never heard of him."

"Very probably, as you read only Alphonso the Tenth, Raymond Sully, Peter of Toledo, and Albertus Magnus."

"They are the only men who really lived, because all their lives they were occupied by that great question: to be, or not to be."

"There are two methods of living, master."

"I know only one, for my part, — namely, to exist. But let us return to your philosophers. You called them, I think — ?"

"Voltaire and Rousseau."

"Good. I shall remember those names. And you propose by means of these men —"

"To make myself master of the present, and to undermine the future."

"Then it appears the people in this country are very stupid, since they can be led by ideas."

"On the contrary, it is because they have too much mind that ideas have more power over them than facts. Besides, I have an auxiliary more powerful than all the philosophers on earth."

"What is that?"

"Love of change. It is now some sixteen hundred years since monarchy was established in France, and the people are wearied of it."

"So that you think they will overthrow it?"

"I am sure of it."

"And you would help them to begin the work?"

"Ay; with all my strength."

"Fool!"

"How so?"

"What will you gain by the overthrow of this monarchy?"

"I? Nothing. But the people will gain happiness."

"Come, as I am satisfied with what I have done to-day, I am willing to waste a little time on you. Explain, then, first, how you are to attain to this happiness, and afterwards what happiness is."

"How I am to attain to it?"

"Yes, to this universal happiness of yours, or to the overthrow of the monarchy, which in your eyes seems to be the same thing."

"Well, there exists at this moment a ministry which is the last rampart of the monarchy,—intelligent, industrious, courageous, and which might perhaps maintain this tottering and worn-out machine for twenty years longer; but they will assist me to overturn it."

"Who? Your philosophers?"

"No; the philosophers support it, on the contrary."

"What! your philosophers support a ministry which supports a monarchy to which they themselves are hostile? What fools these philosophers of yours are!"

"It is because the prime minister is himself a philosopher."

"So! I understand; they mean to govern in the person of this minister. They are not fools, then; they are selfish."

"I do not wish to discuss what they are," exclaimed Balsamo, who began to get impatient. "All I know is that, this ministry overturned, every one will cry havoc, and let slip the dogs of war on their successors. First, there will be against them the philosophers, then the parliament. The philosophers will blame, the parliament will blame; the ministry will persecute the philosophers, and will dissolve the parliament. Then both mind and matter will combine, and organise a silent league,—an opposition obstinate, tenacious, incessant which will attack, undermine, shake all. Instead of parliaments, judges will be appointed; these judges, nominated by the king, will move heaven and earth in defence of royalty; they will be accused, and with truth, of venality, of connivance, of injustice. The nation will arise, and then the monarchy will have against it the philosophers,—that is, mind; the parliaments,—that is, the middle-class; the people,—that is, the lever which Archimedes sought, and with which he could have raised the world."

"Well, when you have raised the world, you can only let it fall back again into its old place."

"Yes; but in falling back it will crush the monarchy to atoms."

"And when the monarchy is crushed to atoms—to adopt your false metaphors and inflated language—what will arise on its ruins?"

"Liberty."

"Ah! the French will then be free?"

"They cannot fail to be so soon."

“All free?”

“All.”

“There will then be in France thirty millions of free men?”

“Yes.”

“And among those thirty millions of free men, has it never occurred to you that there might be one, with a little more brains than the rest, who, some fine morning, will seize on the liberty of the twenty-nine millions nine hundred and ninety-nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine, in order that he might have a little more liberty himself? You remember that dog we had at Medina, who ate up what was intended for all the other dogs?”

“Yes; but you may remember, also, that one day the others combined together and strangled him.”

“Because they were dogs; in such a case men would have done nothing.”

“Then you place man’s intelligence below that of the dog, master?”

“All examples prove it.”

“What examples?”

“I think you may recall among the ancients a certain Cæsar Augustus, and among the moderns a certain Oliver Cromwell, who bit rather deeply into the Roman cake and the English cake, without any great resistance having been offered by those from whom they snatched it.”

“Well; and supposing that the man of whom you speak should arise, he will be mortal, he will die; and before dying he will have done good even to those whom he may have oppressed; for he will have changed the nature of the aristocracy. Being obliged to lean for support on something, he will choose that which is strongest,—the people. Instead of an equality which degrades, he will establish an equality which elevates: for equality has no fixed range; it adapts itself to the level of him who makes it. Now, in elevating the people in the social scale, he will have introduced a principle unknown until his time.

A revolution will make the French free; a protectorate under another Cæsar Augustus, or another Oliver Cromwell, will make them equal."

Althotas wheeled round in his arm-chair.

"Oh, the stupidity of man!" he cried. "Busy yourself for twenty years in educating a child; teach him all that you know, that at thirty he may come and tell you, 'Men will be equal!'"

"Certainly, men will be equal — equal before the law."

"And before death, fool? — before death, that law of laws, will they be equal, when one shall die at three days old and another at one hundred years? Equal? Men equal as long as they are subject to death? Oh, fool! Thrice sodden fool!"

And Althotas threw himself back in his chair to laugh at his ease, whilst Balsamo, grave and sad, sat with his head leaning on his hand.

The old man at length turned a look of pity on him.

"Am I," said he, "the equal of the workman who munches his coarse bread? of the sucking babe? of the drivelling old man sunk in second childhood? Wretched sophist that you are! Men can be equal only when they are immortal; for, when immortal, they will be gods, and gods alone are on an equality with one another."

"Immortal!" murmured Balsamo. "Immortal! — 't is a chimera."

"A chimera? Yes, a chimera like steam; a chimera like the electric fluid; a chimera like everything which is sought, which is not yet discovered, but which will be discovered. Rake up the dust of bygone worlds, lay bare one after another the superincumbent strata, each of which represents a social state now passed away; and in these human strata, in this detritus of kingdoms, in these slimy deposits of time, into which modern investigation has pierced like an iron ploughshare, what do you read? Is it not that men have, in all ages, sought what I seek, under the various names of the highest good, human

happiness, perfection? When did they not seek it? They sought it in the days of Homer, when men lived two hundred years; they sought it in the days of the patriarchs, when they lived eight centuries. They did not find that highest good, that well-being, that perfection; for, if they had, this decrepit world would now be fresh, youthful, roseate as the morning dawn. Instead of that we have suffering, death, decay. Is suffering good? Is death lovely? Is decay fair to look upon?"

Here the old man was interrupted by his short, dry cough, and Balsamo had a moment to reply.

"You acknowledge," said he, "that no one has yet discovered that elixir of life which you seek. I tell you that no one will ever discover it. Submit to God."

"Fool! No one has discovered it, therefore no one will discover it! By that mode of reasoning we should never have made any discoveries. But do you think that all discoveries are new things, inventions? Far from it; they are forgotten things found again. Why should things, once found, be forgotten? Because life is too short for the discoverer to draw from his discovery all the deductions which belong to it. Twenty times has man been on the point of grasping the elixir of life. Do you think that the Styx was merely a dream of Homer's? Do you think that Achilles, almost immortal, because vulnerable in his heel alone, was a fable? No; Achilles was the pupil of Chiron, as you are my pupil. That word Chiron means either best or worst. Chiron was a sage whom they have depicted as a Centaur, because by his learning he had endowed man with the strength and swiftness of the horse. Well, like me, he had almost found the elixir of immortality. Perhaps, like me, he wanted only three drops of blood, which you refuse me. The want of those three drops of blood rendered Achilles vulnerable in his heel; death found a passage,—it entered. Well, what have you to say to that?"

"I say," replied Balsamo, visibly shaken, "that I have

my task and you have yours; let each fulfil his own at his own personal risk and danger. I will not second yours by a crime."

"By a crime?"

"Yes; and by such a crime as would raise a whole people with cries of indignation in pursuit of you, — a crime which would cause you to hang on one of those infamous gibbets from which your science has not secured the best men any more than the worst."

Althotas struck the marble table with his dry and fleshless hands. "Come!" said he, "be not a humane idiot, — the worst race of idiots which exist in the world! Let us just converse a little on these laws of yours, — these brutal and absurd laws, written by animals of your species who shudder at a drop of blood shed for a wise purpose, but gloat over torrents of the vital fluid shed on scaffolds, before the ramparts of cities, or on those plains which they call fields of battle! — your laws, ignorant and selfish, sacrificing the future generation to the present, and which have taken for their motto: 'Live to-day; for to-morrow we die!' — let us speak of them, I say."

"Say what you have to say; I am listening," said Balsamo, becoming more and more gloomy.

"Have you a pencil? I wish you to make a little calculation."

"I can calculate without pen or pencil; proceed with what you have to say."

"What was this that your project was? Oh! I remember. You are to overturn a ministry, dissolve the parliament, establish venal judges, cause a national bankruptcy, stir up rebellion, kindle a revolution, overturn the monarchy, raise up a protectorate, and hurl down the protector. The revolution is to bring freedom; the protectorship, equality. Then, the French being free and equal, your task will be accomplished? Is not that it?"

"Yes; do you look on the thing as impossible?"

"I do not believe in impossibility. You see I play fairly with you."

“Well, what then?”

“In the first place, France is not England, where what you wish to do has already been done,—plagiarist that you are! France is not an isolated land, where ministers may be dismissed, parliaments dissolved, iniquitous judges established, bankruptcy brought about, revolt fomented, revolution kindled, the monarchy overturned, a protectorship established, and the protector then overthrown, without other nations interfering a little in these movements. France is soldered to Europe as the liver to the frame of man. It has roots in all nations; its fibres extend through every people. Try to tear up the liver of this great machine which is called the European continent, and for twenty, thirty, forty years, perhaps, the whole body will quiver. But I shall take the lowest number,—I shall say twenty years. Is that too much, oh sage philosopher?”

“No, it is not too much,” said Balsamo; “it is not even enough.”

“However, I am satisfied with it. Twenty years of war, of a bloody, mortal, incessant strife,—let me see, I put down that at two hundred thousand dead each year. That is not too high a calculation, considering that there will be fighting at the same time in Germany, Italy, Spain, and Heaven knows where else! Two hundred thousand men a year in twenty years make four millions. Allowing each man seventeen pounds of blood, which is nearly the natural quantity, that will make—seventeen multiplied by four—let me see—that will make sixty-eight millions of pounds of blood, shed for the attainment of your object. I, for my part, ask but three drops. Say, now, which of us is mad? which of us is the savage? which of us the cannibal? Well, you do not answer?”

“Yes, master, I do answer that three drops of blood would be nothing were you sure of success.”

“And you, who would shed sixty-eight millions of pounds, are you sure of success? Speak! If you be sure, lay your hand on your heart and say, ‘Master, for these

four millions of dead I guarantee the happiness of the human race!"

"Master," said Balsamo, evading a direct reply, "in the name of Heaven, seek for some other means than this!"

"Ah, you dare not answer me! You dare not answer me!" exclamied Althotas, triumphantly.

"You are deceived, master, about the efficacy of the means; it is impossible."

"Ay? So you give advice, so you contradict me, so you give me the lie, do you?" said Althotas, rolling his grey eyes from beneath his white and shaggy eyebrows with an expression of concentrated anger.

"No, master; but I cannot help reflecting on the difficulties in your way; I, who am brought every day into contact with the world, in opposition to men who have to struggle against princes, and who do not live like you, secluded in a corner, indifferent to all that passes around you, and careless whether your actions are forbidden or authorised by the laws,—a pure abstraction, in short, of the savant and the scholar,—I, in short, who see the difficulties, warn you of them. That is all."

"You could easily set aside all those difficulties if you chose."

"Say, rather, if I believed that you were in the right."

"You do not believe so, then?"

"No," said Balsamo.

"You are only tempting me!" cried Althotas.

"No, I merely express my doubts."

"Well, come; do you believe in death?"

"I believe in what *is*. Now, death *is*."

Althotas shrugged his shoulders.

"Death *is*," continued Balsamo; "that is one point which you will not contest."

"No, it is incontestable; it is omnipresent, invincible, too—is it not?" added the old man, with a smile which made his adept shudder.

"Oh, yes, master; omnipresent, and, above all, invincible!"

“And when you see a corpse, the cold sweat bedews your forehead, regret pierces your heart?”

“No, the cold sweat does not bedew my forehead, because I am familiar with every form of human misery; grief does not pierce my heart, because I attach little value to life. I only say in the presence of a corpse: ‘Death! death! thou art as powerful as God. Thou reignest as a sovereign, O death, and none can prevail against thee!’”

Althotas listened to Balsamo in silence, giving no other sign of impatience than that of turning a scalpel eagerly in his fingers; but when the pupil had ended his painful and solemn invocation, the master looked around him with a smile, and his piercing eyes, which seemed to penetrate nature’s most hidden secrets, rested on a poor black dog, which lay trembling in a corner of the room on a little heap of straw. It was the last of three animals of the same species which Althotas had demanded for his experiments, and which Balsamo had procured for him.

“Take that dog,” said Althotas, “and place it on the table.”

Balsamo obeyed.

The creature, which seemed to have a presentiment of its fate, and which had, no doubt, already been in the hands of the experimenter, began to tremble, struggle, and howl, as soon as it felt the contact of the marble table.

“And so,” said Althotas, “you believe in life, do you not, since you believe in death?”

“Certainly.”

“There is a dog which appears to me quite alive. What do you think?”

“He is alive, assuredly, because he howls, struggles, is terrified.”

“How ugly black dogs are! By the by, remember the first opportunity to get me some white ones.”

“I will endeavour to do so.”

“Well, you say this one is alive? Bark, my little

fellow, bark!" said the old man, with his frightful laugh; "we must convince Monseigneur Acharat that you are alive." And he touched the dog on a certain muscle, which made him bark, or rather, howl, immediately.

"Very well; now bring forward the air-pump, and put the dog under the receiver. But I forgot to ask you in which death you have the firmest belief."

"I do not know what you mean, master; death is death."

"Very just; that is my opinion also. Then, since death is death, make a vacuum, Acharat."

Balsamo turned a handle, and the air which was enclosed with the dog in the receiver rushed out by means of a tube with a sharp whistling sound. The little dog seemed at first restless, then looked around, snuffed the air uneasily, raised its head, breathed noisily and hurriedly, and at last sunk down suffocated, swollen, senseless.

"Now, the dog is dead of apoplexy, is he not?" said Althotas, — "a very good kind of death, as it does not cause much suffering."

"Yes."

"Is he really dead?"

"Certainly he is."

"You do not seem quite convinced, Acharat."

"Yes, I assure you I am."

"Oh, you know my resources, do you not? You suppose that I have discovered the art of insufflation, do you not? — that other problem which consists in restoring life by making the vital air circulate in a body which has not been wounded, as in a bladder which has not been pierced."

"No; I suppose nothing. I simply believe that the dog is dead."

"However, for greater security, we shall kill him twice. Lift up the receiver, Acharat."

Acharat raised the glass shade. The dog did not stir; his eyelids were closed, and his heart had ceased to beat.

"Take this scalpel, and without wounding the larynx, divide the vertebral column."

"I do so only to satisfy you."

"And also to put an end to the poor animal, in case it should not be quite dead," replied Althotas, smiling with that kind of obstinate pertinacity peculiar to the aged.

Balsamo made an incision with the keen blade, which divided the vertebral column about two inches below the brain, and laid bare a large bloody wound. The animal, or rather the dead body of the animal, remained motionless.

"Ha! by my faith, he was quite dead," said Althotas. "See! not a fibre moves, not a muscle stirs, not one atom of his flesh recoils at this second attempt."

"I shall acknowledge all that as often as you like," said Balsamo, impatiently.

"Then you are certain that you behold an animal, inert, cold, forever incapable of motion. Nothing can prevail against death, you say. No power can restore life, or even the semblance of life to this poor creature?"

"No power, except that of God."

"Yes, but God turns not aside from His established laws. When God kills, as He is supreme wisdom, He has a reason for doing so; some benefit is to result from it. An assassin, I forget his name, said that once, and it was well said. Nature has an interest in Death. Then you see before you a dog as dead as it is possible to be; Nature has taken possession of her rights over him."

Althotas fixed his piercing eye on Balsamo, who, wearied by the old man's dotage, only bowed in reply.

"Well," continued Althotas, "what would you say if this dog opened his eye and looked at you?"

"I should be very much surprised, master."

"You would be surprised? Ha! I am delighted to hear it." On uttering these words with his dreary, hollow laugh, the old man drew near the dog a machine composed of plates of metal separated by dampers of cloths; the centre of this apparatus was swimming in a mixture of acidulated water; the two extremities, or poles, as they are called, projected from the trough.

"Which eye do you wish him to open, Acharat?" asked the old man.

"The right."

He placed the two poles of the machine in juxtaposition, separated, however, from each other by a small piece of silk, and fixed them on a muscle in the neck. Instantly the dog opened the right eye and looked steadily at Balsamo, who recoiled with horror.

"Shall we now pass to the jaws?" said Althotas.

Balsamo made no reply; he was overpowered with astonishment.

Another muscle was touched; and, the eye having closed, the jaws opened, showing the sharp white teeth, and below them the gums red and quivering apparently with life.

"This is, in truth, strange!" murmured Balsamo, unable to conceal his agitation.

"You see that death is not so powerful after all," said Althotas, triumphing at the discomfiture of his pupil, "since a poor old man like me, who must soon be its prey, can turn it—the inexorable one—from its path." Then, with a sharp, ringing laugh, he suddenly added: "Take care, Acharat, the dog who just now seemed as if he would bite you, is going to give you chase. Take care!"

And, in fact, the dog, with its neck laid open, its gaping mouth, and quivering eye, rose suddenly on its four legs, and staggered for a moment, its head hanging down hideously. Balsamo felt his hair stand on end, and he recoiled to the wall of the apartment, uncertain whether to fly or remain.

"Come, come, I do not wish to kill you with fright in trying to instruct you," said Althotas, pushing aside the dead body and the machine. "Enough of experiments like that."

Immediately the body, ceasing to be in contact with the battery, fell down, stiff and motionless as before.

"Could you have believed that of death, Acharat? Did you think it so kindly disposed?"

"It is strange, in truth, — very strange!" replied Balsamo, drawing nearer.

"You see, my child, that we may arrive at what I seek, for the first step towards it is made. What is it to prolong life, when we have already succeeded in annihilating death?"

"But we must not assume that yet," objected Balsamo; "for the life which you have just restored is only factitious."

"With time we shall discover the real life. Have you not read in the Roman poets that Cassidæus restored life to dead bodies?"

"Yes, in the works of the poets."

"Do not forget, my friend, that the Romans called poets *vates*."

"But I have still an objection to offer."

"Let me hear it! Let me hear it!"

"If your elixir of life were made, and if you caused this dog to swallow some of it, he would live eternally?"

"Without doubt."

"But suppose he fell into the hands of an experimenter like you, who cut his throat, what then?"

"Good! good!" cried the old man, joyfully, and rubbing his hands together; "this is what I expected from you."

"Well, if you expected it, reply to it."

"I ask no better."

"Will your elixir prevent a chimney from falling on a man's head, a pistol-ball from going through his heart, a horse from giving him a kick that shall destroy him?"

Althotas looked at Balsamo with the eye of a bravo who feels that he has exposed himself to his adversary's blow.

"No, no, no!" said he; "you are a real logician, my dear Acharat. No, I cannot prevent the effects of the chimney, or of the ball, or of the horse, whilst there are houses, firearms, and horses."

"However, you can bring the dead to life?"

"Why, yes — for a moment; not for an indefinite period.

In order to do that I must first discover the spot where the soul is lodged, and that may be rather tedious; but I can prevent the soul from leaving the body by a wound."

"How so?"

"By causing the wound to close up."

"Even if an artery be divided."

Certainly."

"Ah! I should like to see that done."

"Very well, look!" And before Balsamo could prevent him, the old man opened a vein in his left arm with a lancet. There was so little blood in his body, and it circulated so slowly that it was some time before it issued from the wound, but at last it did flow abundantly.

"Great Heaven!" exclaimed Balsamo.

"Well, what is the matter?" said Althotas.

"You have wounded yourself seriously."

"That is because you are so sceptical; you must see and touch before you will believe."

"He then took a little phial which he had placed near him, and poured a few drops of its contents on the wound.

"Look!" said he.

At the touch of this magic fluid the blood ceased to flow, the flesh contracted, closing up the vein, and the wound became merely like the prick of a pin, too small an opening for the vital stream to issue from.

This time Balsamo gazed at the old man in amazement.

"That is another of my discoveries, Acharat. What do you think of it?"

"Oh, master, you are the most learned of men."

"Yes, acknowledge that if I have not conquered death, I have at least dealt it a blow from which it will not readily recover. The bones of the human body are easily broken; I shall render them, my son, as hard as steel. It has blood, which, when it is shed, carries life along with it. I shall prevent the blood from leaving the body. The flesh is soft and can be pierced without difficulty; I shall make it invulnerable as that of the paladins of the middle

ages, which blunted the edge of swords and axes. But to do all that, it requires an Althotas who shall live three hundred years. Well, give me, then, what I ask, and I shall live one thousand! Oh, my dear Acharat, all depends on you! Give me back my youth; give me back the vigour of my body; give me back the freshness of my ideas; and you shall see whether I fear the sword, the ball, the tottering wall, or the stupid beast which bites or kicks! In my fourth youth, Acharat—that is, before I have lived to the age of four men—I tell you I shall have renewed the face of the world; I shall have made for myself and for a regenerated race of men a new world, without falling chimneys, without swords, without musket-balls, without kicking horses; for men will then understand that it is better to live to help and love one another than to tear each other to pieces, and to destroy each other."

"It is true, master; or, at least, it is possible."

"Well, bring me the child, then."

"Give me time to reflect on the matter, and reflect on it yourself."

Althotas darted on his adept a glance of sovereign scorn.

"Go," said he, "go! I shall yet convince you that I am right. And, in truth, the blood of man is not so precious an ingredient that a substitute for it may not be found. Go! I shall seek—I shall find. Go! I need you not."

Balsamo struck the trap-door with his foot and descended into the lower apartment, mute, melancholy, and wholly subdued by the genius of this man, who compelled him to believe in impossibilities, by accomplishing them before his eyes.

CHAPTER LXI.

INQUIRIES.

THIS night, so long and so fertile in events, during which we have been borne about, as in the cloud of the mythological deities, from St. Denis to Muette, from Muette to the Rue Coq-Héron, from the Rue Coq-Héron to the Rue Plastrière, and from thence to the Rue St. Claude, had been employed by Madame Dubarry in efforts to bend the king's mind to her new political views. She insisted in particular on the danger there would be in allowing the Choiseuls to gain ground with the dauphiness.

The king replied to this, with a shrug, that the dauphiness was a child, and the Duke de Choiseul was an elderly minister, and that consequently there was no danger, seeing that he could not amuse her, and she would not understand him. Then, enchanted with this *bon mot*, the king cut short all further explanations.

But if the king was enchanted, the countess was far from being so, as she thought she perceived symptoms of his Majesty's throwing off her yoke.

Louis XV. was a male coquet. His greatest happiness consisted in his making his mistresses jealous, providing always that their jealousy did not assume the form of obstinate quarrels and prolonged sulkiness.

Madame Dubarry was jealous,—in the first place from vanity, secondly, from fear. It had cost her too much pains to attain her present elevated position, and it was too far removed from her point of departure for her to dare, like Madame de Pompadour, to tolerate other favourites near the king. Madame Dubarry, then, being jealous,

was determined to probe to the bottom this sudden change in the king's manner.

The king replied to her in these memorable words, in which there was not one particle of truth: "I am thinking very seriously about the happiness of my daughter-in-law; I really do not know whether the dauphin will make her happy or not."

"Why not, sire?" .

"Because Louis, at Compiègne, St. Denis, and Muette, seemed to me much more occupied with any other woman than his own wife."

"In truth, sire, if your Majesty had not told me this yourself, I should not have believed it; for the dauphiness is lovely."

"She is rather thin."

"She is so young."

"Oh, as for that, look at Mademoiselle de Taverney; she is the same age as the arch-duchess!"

"Well, sire?"

"Well, she is a faultless beauty."

A flash from the countess's eye warned the king of his mistake.

"And you yourself, dear countess," added he, quickly, "you yourself, at sixteen, were as round as one of our friend Boucher's shepherdesses, I am sure."

This little bit of adulation smoothed matters in some degree, but the blow had taken effect. Madame Dubarry therefore assumed the offensive.

"Ah!" said she, bridling, "so she is very handsome, this Mademoiselle de Taverney?"

"Handsome! How should I know?" replied the king.

"What? You praise her, and yet you do not know, you say, whether she is handsome or not?"

"I know that she is not thin, that is all."

"Then you have seen her, and looked rather narrowly at her?"

"Ah! my dear countess, you push me rather closely.

You know that I am short-sighted; a mass strikes me, but devil take the details! In looking at the dauphiness, I saw bones and nothing more."

"And in looking at Mademoiselle de Taverney you saw masses, to use your own expression; for the dauphiness is an aristocratic beauty, Mademoiselle de Taverney a vulgar one."

"Oh, ho!" said the king, "by this mode of reckoning, Jeanne, you will never be an aristocratic beauty! Come, you must be jesting, I think."

"Very good; a compliment!" thought the countess to herself. "Unfortunately this compliment only serves as the outer covering of another compliment which is not intended for me." Then aloud, —

"On my honour," said she, "I shall be very glad if her Royal Highness the dauphiness chooses for her ladies of honour those that are a little attractive; a court of old women is frightful."

"My fairest one, you need not tell that to me. I said the same thing to the dauphin yesterday; but our newly fledged husband seems quite indifferent about the matter."

"And suppose for a beginning she were to take this Mademoiselle de Taverney?"

"I think she has already chosen her," replied Louis.

"Ah! you know that, sire?"

"At least, I fancy I heard some one say so."

"She has no fortune; I hear."

"No, but she is of an old family. The Taverneys-Maison-Rouge are of ancient descent, and have served the state honourably."

"Who patronises them?"

"I have no idea. But I think they are beggars, as you say."

"In that case it cannot be the Duke de Choiseul; otherwise they would actually burst with pensions."

"Countess, countess, I beseech you, no politics!"

"Do you call it politics to say that the Choiseuls are robbing you?"

"Certainly it is," said the king, rising.

An hour afterwards the king arrived at the great Trianon, delighted at having awakened the countess's jealousy, but repeating to himself, in a half-whisper, as the Duke de Richelieu might have done at thirty, "Really, jealous women are very tiresome!"

No sooner had his Majesty left Madame Dubarry than she also rose and passed into her boudoir, where Chon awaited her, impatient to hear the news.

"Well," said she, "your star has been in the ascendant these last few days, — presented to the dauphiness the day before yesterday, invited to her table yesterday!"

"A great triumph, truly!"

"What! Do you speak in that tone? Are you aware that at this moment a hundred carriages are hastening to Luciennes that their occupants may obtain a smile from you?"

"I am sorry to hear it."

"Why so?"

"Because they are losing their time. Neither the carriages nor their owners shall have a smile from me this morning."

"Ah! this is a cloudy morning, then, countess?"

"Yes, very cloudy. My chocolate; quick, my chocolate!"

Chon rang the bell, and Zamore appeared.

"My chocolate!" said the countess.

Zamore retired, walking very slowly and with a most majestic strut.

"The wretch intends that I should die of hunger!" cried the countess. "A hundred blows of the whip if you do not run."

"Me not run, me governor," said Zamore, majestically.

"Ah! You governor?" exclaimed the countess, seizing a little riding-whip with a silver handle, which she used for keeping peace among the spaniels and monkeys; "governor, indeed! Wait, governor, and you shall see!"

At this spectacle Zamore took to flight, slamming the doors behind him and uttering loud cries.

"Really, Jeanne, you are perfectly ferocious to-day," said Chon.

"I am at liberty to be so if I please, am I not?"

"Oh, very well; but in that case you must permit me to leave you, my dear."

"Why so?"

"I am afraid of being devoured."

Three taps were heard at the door.

"Well, who is knocking now?" said the countess, impatiently.

"Whoever he is, he will get a warm reception," muttered Chon.

"Oh! I should advise you to give me a bad reception," said Jean, throwing open the door with a majestic air.

"Well, and what would happen if you were ill received? For, after all, the thing is possible."

"It would happen," said Jean, "that I should never come back."

"Well?"

"And that you would lose a great deal more than I should by receiving me badly."

"Impertinent fellow!"

"Ah! I am impertinent, because I do not flatter. What is the matter with her this morning, Chon, my beauty?"

"Don't speak to me about her, Jean; she is perfectly insufferable. Oh, here is the chocolate!"

"Oh, well, never mind her, then. How do you do, chocolate? I am very glad to see you, my dear chocolate!" continued Jean, taking the tray from the servant, placing it on a little table in the corner, and seating himself before it.

"Come, Chon, come!" said he; "those who are too proud to speak shall not have any."

"You are quite delightful, you two," said the countess, seeing that Chon by a sign gave Jean to understand that he might breakfast alone. "You pretend to be sensitive, and yet you do not see that I am suffering."

"What is the matter, then?" said Chon, approaching her.

"No!" exclaimed the countess, pettishly. "Neither of them bestows a thought on what torments me."

"And what does torment you?" asked Jean, coolly cutting a slice of bread and butter.

"Do you want money?" asked Chon.

"Oh! as for money, the king shall want before I."

"I wish you would lend me a thousand louis-d'or, then," said Jean; "I require them very much."

"A thousand fillips on your great red nose!"

"The king has positively decided on keeping that abominable Choiseul, then?" asked Chon.

"Great news that! You know very well that the Choiseuls are immovable."

"Then the king has fallen in love with the dauphiness."

"Now you are coming nearer it. But look at that beast stuffing himself with chocolate! He would not move his little finger to save me from destruction. Oh, those two creatures will be the death of me!"

Jean, without paying the least attention to the storm which was raging behind him, cut a second slice, buttered it carefully, and poured out another cup of chocolate.

"How? The king is really in love?" cried Chon, clasping her hands and turning pale.

Madame Dubarry nodded, as much as to say, "You have hit it."

"Oh, if it be so, we are lost!" continued Chon; "and will you suffer that, Jeanne? But whom has he fancied?"

"Ask your brother, there, who is purple with chocolate, and who looks as if he was just going to burst. He will tell you, for he knows, or at least he suspects."

Jean raised his head.

"Did you speak?" said he.

"Yes, most obliging brother!—most useful ally!" said Jeanne, "I was asking you the name of the person whom the king has fancied."

Jean's mouth was so well filled that it was with great difficulty he sputtered out, "Mademoiselle de Taverney."

"Mademoiselle de Taverney! Oh, mercy on us!" cried Chon.

"He knows it, the wretch!" shrieked the countess, throwing herself back in her chair, and clasping her hands; "he knows it, and he eats!"

"Oh!" said Chon, visibly deserting from her brother's camp to enter that of her sister.

"I wonder," cried the countess, "what prevents me from tearing out his two great ugly eyes? Look at them, all swollen with sleep, the lazy wretch! He has just got up, my dear, just got up!"

"You are mistaken," said Jean, "I have not been in bed at all."

"And what were you doing, then, you glutton?"

"Why, faith, I have been running up and down all night and all morning, too."

"I told you so. Oh, who is better served than I am? No one, no one to tell me where that girl is!"

"Where she is?" asked Jean.

"Yes."

"Where should she be but in Paris?"

"In Paris? But whereabouts in Paris?"

"Rue Coq-Héron."

"Who told you so?"

"The coachman who drove her; I waited for him at the stables and questioned him."

"He told you—"

"That he had just driven the entire Taverney family to a little hotel in the Rue Coq-Héron, situated in a garden adjoining the Hôtel D'Armenonville."

"Oh, Jean, Jean!" cried the countess, "this reconciles me to you, my dear. But now what we want is to know the particulars,—how she lives, whom she sees, what she does. Does she receive any letters? These are the important points."

“Well, you shall know all that.”

“But how? But how?”

“Ah! just so. Now try to find out how yourself. I have found out a great deal for my share.”

“Oh,” said Chon, “there might be lodgings to let in the Rue Coq-Héron.”

“An excellent idea!” exclaimed the countess. “You must hasten to the Rue Coq-Héron, Jean, and hire a house. We will conceal some one there who can see every one that goes in or comes out. We shall know all. Quick! Order the carriage!”

“It is useless; there is neither house nor lodging to be let in that street.”

“How do you know?”

“Faith, in the surest way that one can know,—I have inquired; but there are apartments—”

“Where, where?”

“In the Rue Plastrière.”

“And where is the Rue Plastrière?”

“It is a street whose rear looks toward the garden of the hôtel.”

“Well, quick, quick!” said the countess, “let us hire an apartment in the Rue Plastrière.”

“It is already hired,” said Jean.

“Admirable man!” cried the countess; “kiss me, Jean.”

Jean wiped his mouth, kissed Madame Dubarry on both cheeks, and then made a ceremonious bow of thanks for the honour that had been done him.

“Was it not luck?” said he.

“But I hope no one recognised you?”

“Who the devil should recognise me in a street like that?”

“And what have you engaged?”

“A little apartment in an obscure, out-of-the-way house.”

“But they must have asked for whom?”

“Certainly they did.”

“And what did you say?”

“That it was for a young widow. Are you a widow, Chon?”

“Of course I am!” said Chon.

“Excellent!” said the countess. “Then it is Chon who shall be installed in the apartment; she will watch, she will spy, — but not a moment must be lost.”

“Therefore I shall set off at once,” said Chon. “The carriage! the carriage!”

“The carriage!” repeated Madame Dubarry, ringing loud enough to have awakened the whole household of the Sleeping Beauty in the Wood.

Jean and the countess knew perfectly what they had to dread from Andrée’s presence. She had, even on her first appearance, attracted the king’s attention, therefore she was dangerous.

“This girl,” said the countess, whilst the horses were being put to, “is not a true provincial if she have not brought some rustic lover with her from her dove-cot at Taverney; let us but discover the swain, and patch up a marriage at once. Nothing would cool the king like a marriage between country lovers.”

“Oh, the devil! I am not quite so sure of that,” said Jean; “I rather distrust his most Christian Majesty. You know better than any one that a young married woman is a very dainty morsel for him, while a girl with a lover would be less attractive. But the carriage is ready.”

Chon sprang into it after having embraced her sister and pressed Jean’s hand.

“But why not take Jean?” asked the countess.

“No, no; I shall go my own way,” replied Jean. “Wait for me in the Rue Plastrière; I shall be your first visitor in your new domicile.”

Chon drove off. Jean seated himself at his table again, and poured out a third cup of chocolate.

Chon called first at the family residence, and changed her dress, studying as much as possible to assume the

costume and appearance of a tradesman's wife. Then, when she was satisfied with her labours, she threw over her aristocratic shoulders a meagre black silk mantle, ordered a sedan chair to the door, and about half an hour afterwards, she and Sylvie were mounting the steep, narrow staircase leading up to the fourth story of a house in the Rue Plastrière. For in a fourth story was situated that lodging so fortunately procured by the viscount.

When she reached the landing of the second story, Chon turned, for she heard some one following her. It was the old proprietress of the house, who lived on the first floor, and who, hearing a noise, had come out to see what caused it, and was rather puzzled at beholding two women, so young and pretty, enter her abode. Raising her snappish countenance to the landing above her, her gaze was met by two faces whose smiling expression formed a strong contrast to her own.

"Stop, ladies, stop!" cried she; "what do you want here?"

"The lodging which my brother was to engage for us, ma'am," said Chon, assuming the serious air of a widow. "Have you not seen him, or can we have made a mistake in the house?"

"Oh, no," replied the old proprietress; "you are quite right; it is on the fourth story. Poor young creature! A widow at your age!"

"Alas! alas!" sighed Chon, raising her eyes to heaven.

"But do not grieve; you will be very pleasantly situated in the Rue Plastrière. It is a charming street; you will hear no noise, and your apartment looks into the gardens."

"That is just what I wished, ma'am."

"And besides, by means of the corridor, you can see into the street when any procession is passing, or when the learned dogs are exhibited."

"Thank you; that will be a great relief to me," sighed Chon, and she continued to ascend.

The old proprietress followed her with her eyes until

she reached the fourth story. Then Chon, after shutting the door, hurried to the window which looked on the garden.

Jean had committed no mistake; almost immediately below the window of the apartment which he had engaged was the garden pavilion which the coachman had described to him.

Soon, however, all doubts were removed; a young girl came forward to the window of the pavilion, and seated herself before a little embroidery frame. It was Andrée.

CHAPTER LXII.

THE APARTMENT IN THE RUE PLASTRIÈRE.

CHON had not scrutinised the young girl many seconds, before Viscount Jean, ascending the stairs four at a time, like a lawyer's clerk, appeared on the threshold of the pretended widow's apartment. "Well?" said he, inquiringly.

"Is it you, Jean? In truth, you frightened me."

"Well, what do you say to it?"

"Why, that I shall be admirably situated here for seeing all that passes; unluckily, I shall not be able to hear everything."

"Ah! faith, you want too much. By the by, I have another piece of news for you."

"What is it?"

"Wonderful!"

"Pooh!"

"Incomparable!"

"What a bore the man is with his exclamations!"

"The philosopher —"

"Well, what of the philosopher?"

"It is commonly said, 'The wise man is for all events prepared.' Now I am a wise man, but I was not prepared for this."

"I should like to know when you will finish. Perhaps this girl is in the way. In that case, Mademoiselle Sylvie, step into the next room."

"Oh, there is no occasion whatever. That charming girl is not in the way; quite the contrary. Remain, Sylvie,

remain." And the viscount chucked the handsome waiting-maid's chin, whose brow began already to darken at the idea that something was about to be said which she was not to hear.

"Let her stay, then; but speak!"

"Why, I have done nothing else since I have been here."

"And said nothing. So hold your tongue, and let me watch; that will be more to the purpose."

"Don't be out of temper. As I was saying, then, I was passing the fountain —"

"Positively, you never said a word about it."

"Why, there you interrupt me again."

"No."

"I was passing the fountain, then, and bargaining for some old furniture for this frightful lodging, when all at once I felt a stream of water splashing my stockings."

"How very interesting all this is!"

"Only wait; you are in too great a hurry, my dear. Well, I looked, and I saw — guess what! I will give you a hundred guesses."

"Do go on."

"I saw a young gentleman obstructing the jet of the fountain with a piece of bread, and by means of this obstacle causing the water to diverge and to spirt upon me."

"I can't tell you how much your story interests me," said Chon, shrugging her shoulders.

"Only wait. I swore lustily on feeling myself splashed; the bread-soaker turned round, and I saw —"

"Whom? Gilbert?"

"Himself, bare-headed, his waistcoat open, stockings dangling about his heels, shoes unbuckled, — in complete undress, in short."

"Gilbert! And what did he say?"

"I recognised him at once, and he recognised me. I advanced; he retreated. I stretched out my arm; he stretched his legs, and off he scampered, like a greyhound, among the carriages and the water-porters."

"You lost sight of him, then?"

"*Parbleu!* I believe so. You surely do not suppose that I would start off and run too?"

"True; it was impossible, I admit. And so we have lost him."

"Ah! what a pity!" ejaculated Mademoiselle Sylvie.

"Oh! most certainly," said Jean; "I owe him a sound thrashing; and if I had once laid hands upon him, he should have lost nothing for waiting, I promise you; but he guessed my kind intentions towards him, and made good use of his legs."

"No matter; here he is in Paris; that is the essential point. And, in Paris, if you are not on very bad terms with the lieutenant of police, you may find whatever you seek."

"We must find him."

"And when we have got him, we must keep him, too."

"He must be shut up," said Mademoiselle Sylvie; "only, this time, a safer place must be chosen for the purpose."

"And Sylvie will carry his bread and water to that safe place; will you not, Sylvie?" said the viscount.

"It is no subject for jesting, brother," said Chon; "that lad saw the affair of the post-horses, and if he had motives for bearing us a grudge, we might have reason to fear him."

"And therefore," replied Jean, "I made up my mind, while ascending your stairs, to call on Monsieur de Sartines, and inform him of my discovery. Monsieur de Sartines will reply that a man, bareheaded, his stockings about his heels, his shoes unbuckled, soaking his bread at a fountain, must live near the spot where he has been seen in such a plight, and he will then engage to find him for us."

"What can he do here without money?"

"Go errands."

"He! A philosopher of that wild breed; I am surprised at you!"

"He has perhaps found out a relation," said Sylvie;

"some old devotee, who gives him the crusts that are too stale for her lap-dog."

"Enough, enough, Sylvie! Put the house-linen into that old chest; and come you, brother, to our observatory!"

Accordingly the pair approached the window with the greatest caution. Andrée had quitted her embroidery and extended her limbs carelessly upon an arm-chair; then stretched out her hand to a book lying on another chair within her reach, opened it, and was soon absorbed in what the spectators supposed must be a most interesting subject, for the young girl remained motionless from the moment that she commenced to read.

"Oh, the studious creature!" said Mademoiselle Chon; "what can she be reading there?"

"First indispensable article of furniture," replied the viscount, taking from his pocket an opera-glass, which he drew out and pointed at Andrée, resting it upon the angle of the window for the purpose of steadyng it. Chon watched his movements with impatience.

"Well, let us see; is the creature really handsome?" asked she.

"Admirable! She is an exquisite girl! What arms! what hands! what eyes! — lips too tempting for St. Anthony; feet, oh! divine feet! and the ankle, — what an ankle under that silk stocking!"

"Oh! I should advise you to fall in love with her; that would complete the affair," said Chon, peevishly.

"Well, after all, that would be no bad idea either, especially if she would grant me a little love in return; that would somewhat cheer our poor countess."

"Come, hand me that glass, and a truce to your gabble, if that is possible. Yes, in truth, the girl is handsome, and it is impossible that she should not have a lover. She is not reading; look, the book is slipping out of her hand! There, it drops! Stay, I told you, Jean, she was not reading; she is lost in thought."

"Or sleep."

"With her eyes open? Lovely eyes, upon my word!"

"At any rate," said Jean, "if she have a lover, we shall have a good view of him here."

"Yes, if he comes in the day-time; but if he should come at night?"

"The deuce! I did not think of that; and yet it is the first thing that I ought to have thought of; that proves how very simple I am."

"Yes, simple as a lawyer."

"However, now that I am forewarned, I shall devise something."

"What an excellent glass this is!" said Chon. "I can almost read the characters in the book."

Chon had leaned forward out of the window, attracted by her curiosity; but she pulled back her head faster than she had advanced it.

"Well, what is the matter?" asked the viscount.

Chon grasped his arm. "Look cautiously, brother," said she. "Look; who is that person who is leaning out of yonder garret-window on the left? Take care not to be seen."

"Oh, ho!" cried Dubarry, in a low tone; "it is my crust-soaker, God forgive me!"

"He is going to throw himself out!"

"No, he has fast hold of the parapet."

"But what is he looking at with those piercing eyes, with that wild eagerness?"

"He is watching somebody." The viscount struck his forehead. "I have it!" he exclaimed.

"What?"

"By heavens, he is watching the girl!"

"Mademoiselle de Taverney?"

"Yes, yes; that's the inamorato of the dove-cot. She comes to Paris, — he hastens hither, too; she takes lodgings in the Rue Coq-Héron, — he sneaks away from us to go and live in the Rue Plastrière. He is looking at her, and she is musing."

"Upon my word, it is true," said Chon. "Observe that

look; how intently fixed!—that lurid fire of his eyes. He is distractedly in love."

"Sister," said Jean, "let us not give ourselves any further trouble to watch the lady; he will do our business."

"Yes, for his own interest."

"No, for ours. Now let me go and see that dear Sartines. *Pardieu!* we have a chance. But take care, Chon, not to let the philosopher see you; you know how quickly he decamps."

CHAPTER LXIII.

PLAN OF CAMPAIGN.

MONSIEUR DE SARTINES had returned home at three in the morning extremely fatigued, but at the same time highly pleased with the entertainment which he had got up on the spur of the moment for the king and Madame Dubarry. Rekindled by the arrival of the dauphiness, the popular enthusiasm had greeted his Majesty with sundry shouts of "*Vive le Roi!*" greatly diminished in volume since that famous illness at Metz, during which all France had been seen in the churches or on pilgrimage, to obtain the restoration to health of the young Louis XV., called at that time the well-beloved. On the other hand, Madame Dubarry, who scarcely ever failed to be insulted in public by certain exclamations of a particular kind, had, contrary to her expectation, been graciously received by several rows of spectators judiciously placed in front; so that the pleased monarch had smiled graciously on Monsieur de Sartines, and the lieutenant of police reckoned upon a handsome acknowledgment. In consequence, he thought that he might lie till noon, which he had not done for a very long time; and, on rising, he had taken advantage of this kind of holiday which he gave himself, to try on some dozen or two of new wigs, while listening to the reports of the night. At the sixth wig, and when about a third through the reports, the Viscount Jean Dubarry was announced.

"Good!" thought Monsieur de Sartines, "here come my thanks. But who knows? women are so capricious. Show Monsieur le Vicomte into the drawing-room."

Jean, already fatigued with his forenoon's work, seated himself in an arm-chair, and the lieutenant of police, who speedily joined him, felt convinced that there would be nothing unpleasant in this interview. Jean appeared in fact in the highest spirits. The two gentlemen shook hands.

"Well, viscount," said Monsieur de Sartines; "what brings you so early?"

"In the first place," replied Jean, who was accustomed, above all things, to flatter the self-love of those whose good offices he needed, "in the first place, I was anxious to congratulate you on the capital arrangements of your *fête* yesterday."

"Ah! many thanks. Is it officially?"

"Officially, as far as regards Luciennes."

"That is all I want. Is it not there that the sun rises?"

"Aye, and retires to rest occasionally."

And Dubarry burst into a loud and rather vulgar laugh, but one which gave his physiognomy that good-natured look which it frequently required. "But," said he, "besides the compliments which I have to pay you, I have come to solicit a service also."

"Two, if they are possible."

"Not so fast; I hope to hear you say so, by and by. When a thing is lost in Paris, is there any hope of finding it again?"

"If it is either worth nothing, or worth a great deal, there is."

"What I am seeking is of no great value," said Jean, shaking his head.

"And what are you in search of?"

"I am in search of a lad about eighteen years old."

Monsieur de Sartines extended his hand to a paper, took a pencil, and wrote.

"Eighteen years old; what is your lad's name?"

Gilbert."

“What does he do?”

“As little as he can I suppose.”

“Where does he come from?”

“From Lorraine.”

“With whom was he?”

“In the service of the 'Taverneys.”

“They brought him with them?”

“No, my sister Chon picked him up on the high-road, perishing with hunger; she took him into her carriage and brought him to Luciennes, and there —”

“Well, and there?”

“I am afraid the rogue has abused the hospitality he met with.”

“Has he stolen anything?”

“I do not say that. But, in short, he absconded in a strange way.”

“And you would now like to get him back?”

“Yes.”

“Have you any idea where he can be?”

“I met him yesterday at the fountain which forms the corner of the Rue Plastrière, and have every reason to think that he lives in the street. In fact, I believe, if necessary, that I can point out the house.”

“Well, but if you know the house, nothing is easier than to have him seized there. What do you wish to do with him when you have caught him? Have him shut up at Charenton? — in the Bicêtre?”

“Not precisely that.”

“Oh! whatever you please, my dear fellow. Don’t stand on ceremony.”

“No, on the contrary, this lad pleased my sister, and she would have liked to keep him about her, as he is intelligent. If one could get him back for her by fair means, it would be more desirable.”

“We must try. You have not made any inquiry in the Rue Plastrière to learn with whom he is?”

“Oh, no! You must understand that I did not wish to

attract attention, for fear of losing the advantage I had observed. He had already perceived me, and scampered off as if the devil was at his heels; and, if he had known that I was aware of his retreat, he would perhaps have decamped."

"Very likely. Rue Plastrière, you say. At the end, the middle, or the beginning of the street?"

"About one-third down."

"Rest satisfied; I will send a clever fellow thither for you."

"Ah, my dear lieutenant, a man, let him be ever so clever, will always talk a little."

"No, our people never talk."

"The young one is cunning as a fox."

Ah! I comprehend. Pardon me for not having seen your drift sooner. You wish me to go myself? In fact, you are right; it will be better, for there are perhaps difficulties in the way which you are not aware of."

Jean, though persuaded that the magistrate was desirous to assume a little consequence, was not disposed to diminish in the slightest degree the importance of his part. He even added, "It is precisely on account of these difficulties which you anticipate that I am desirous to have your personal assistance."

Monsieur de Sartines rang for his *valet de chambre*. "Let the horses be put to," said he.

"I have a carriage," said Jean.

"Thank you, but I had rather have my own. Mine is without arms, and holds a middle place between a hackney-coach and a chariot. It is freshly painted every month, and for that reason is scarcely to be recognised again. In the mean time, while they are putting the horses to, permit me to try how my new wigs fit me."

"Oh! by all means," said Jean.

Monsieur de Sartines summoned his wig-maker. He was an artist of the first water, and brought his client a perfect assortment of wigs; they were of all

colours, of all dimensions, and of all denominations. Monsieur de Sartines occasionally changed his dress three or four times a day for the purpose of his exploring visits, and he was most particular with regard to the regularity of his costume. While the magistrate was trying on his twenty-fourth wig, a servant came to tell him that the carriage was ready.

"You will know the house again?" said Monsieur de Sartines to Jean, when they were in the carriage.

"Certainly; I see it from this place."

"Have you examined the entrance?"

"That was the first thing I looked to."

"And what sort of an entry is it?"

"An alley."

"Ah! an alley; one-third down the street, you say?"

"Yes, with a private door."

"With a private door? The devil! Do you know on what floor your runaway lives?"

"In the attics. But you will see it directly; I perceive the fountain."

"At a foot-pace, coachman," said Monsieur de Sartines.

The coachman moderated his speed; Monsieur de Sartines drew up the glasses.

"Stop," said Jean; "it is that dingy-looking house."

"Ah, precisely, exclaimed Monsieur de Sartines, clasping his hands; "that is just what I feared."

"What! Are you afraid of something?"

"Alas! yes."

"And what are you afraid of?"

"You are unlucky."

"Explain yourself."

"Why, that dingy house where your runaway lives is the very house of Monsieur Rousseau, of Geneva."

"Rousseau, the author?"

"Yes."

"Well, and how does that concern you?"

"How does that concern me? Ah! it is plain enough

that you are not lieutenant of police, and that you have nothing to do with philosophers."

"Pooh, pooh! Gilbert at Monsieur Rousseau's — what an improbable story!"

"Have you not said that your youth is a philosopher?"

"Yes."

"Well, 'birds of a feather,' you know."

"And supposing that he should be at Monsieur Rousseau's?"

"Yes, let us suppose that."

"What would be the consequence?"

"That you would not have him."

"*Pardieu!* Why not?"

"Because Monsieur Rousseau is a man who is much to be dreaded."

"Why not shut him up in the Bastille, then?"

"I proposed it the other day to the king, but he dared not."

"What! dared not?"

"No, no; he wanted to leave the responsibility of his arrest to me; and by my faith, I was not bolder than the king."

"Indeed!"

"It is as I tell you. We have to look twice, I assure you, before we bring all those philosophers about our ears. *Peste!* Take a person away from Monsieur Rousseau's? No, my dear friend, it will not do."

"In truth, my dear magistrate, you appear to be excessively timorous. Is not the king the king? Are you not his lieutenant of police?"

"And, in truth, you citizens are charming fellows. When you have said, 'Is not the king the king?' you fancy that you have said all that is necessary. Well, listen to me, my dear viscount. I would rather arrest you at Madame Dubarry's than remove your Monsieur Gilbert from Monsieur Rousseau's."

"Really! Many thanks for the preference,"

"Yes, upon my honour, there would be less outcry. You have no idea what delicate skins those literary men have; they cry out at the slightest scratch, as if you were breaking them upon the wheel."

"But let us not conjure up phantoms; look you, is it quite certain that Monsieur Rousseau has harboured our fugitive? This house has four floors. Does it belong to him, and does he alone live in it?"

"Monsieur Rousseau is not worth a denier, and, consequently, has no house in Paris; there are probably from fifteen to twenty other inmates besides himself in yonder barrack. But take this for a rule of conduct: whenever ill luck appears at all probable, reckon upon it; whenever good luck, never reckon upon that. There are always ninety-nine chances for the ill and one for the good. But, however, wait a moment. As I suspected what would happen, I have brought my notes with me."

"What notes?"

"My notes respecting Monsieur Rousseau. Do you suppose that he can take a step without our knowing whither he is gone?"

"Ha! indeed! Then he is really dangerous?"

"No, but he makes us uneasy. Such a madman may at any time break an arm or a leg, and people would say it was we who had broken it."

"A good thing if he would break his neck some day."

"God forbid!"

"Permit me to tell you that this is quite incomprehensible to me."

"The people stone this honest Genevese from time to time, but they allow no one else to do so; and if the smallest pebble were flung at him by us, they would stone us in return."

"Excuse me, but in truth I know not what to make of all these doings."

"And so we must use the most minute precautions. Now let us test the only chance which is left us, —

namely, that he does not lodge with Monsieur Rousseau. Keep yourself out of sight, at the back of the carriage."

Jean obeyed, and Monsieur de Sartines ordered the coachman to walk the horses a few paces to and fro in the street.

He then opened his portfolio, and took some papers out of it. "Let me see," said he, "if your youth is with Monsieur Rousseau. Since what day do you suppose him to have been there?"

"Ever since the sixteenth."

"17th. Monsieur Rousseau was seen herborising at six o'clock in the morning in the wood of Meudon; he was alone."

"He was alone!"

"Let us proceed. 'At two o'clock in the afternoon he was herborising again, but with a young man.'"

"Ah, ha!" cried Jean.

"With a young man," repeated Monsieur de Sartines; "do you understand?"

"That's he, *mordieu!* that's he!"

"The young man is mean-looking—'"

"That is he!"

"The two individuals pick up plants, and dry them in a tin box."

"The devil! the devil!" exclaimed Dubarry.

"That is not all. Listen further: 'In the evening he took the young man home; at midnight the young man had not left the house.'"

"Well?"

"18th. The young man has not left the house, and appears to be installed at Monsieur Rousseau's."

"I have still a gleam of hope."

"You are decidedly an optimist! No matter, tell me your hope."

"It is that he has some relation in the house."

"Come! we must satisfy you, or rather, utterly destroy your hopes. Halt, coachman."

Monsieur de Sartines alighted; he had not taken ten steps before he met a man in grey clothes, and of very equivocal aspect. This man, on perceiving the illustrious magistrate, took off his hat and replaced it, without appearing to attach further importance to his salutation, although respect and attachment had been expressed in his look. Monsieur de Sartines made a sign; the man approached, received some whispered instructions, and disappeared in Rousseau's alley. The lieutenant of police returned to his carriage. Five minutes after, the man in grey made his appearance again, and approached the door.

"I shall turn my head to the right," said Dubarry, "that I may not be seen."

Monsieur de Sartines smiled, received the communication of his agent, and dismissed him.

"Well?" inquired Dubarry.

"Well! the chance was against you, as I apprehended; it is with Rousseau that your Gilbert lodges. You must give him up, depend upon it."

"Give him up?"

"Yes. You would not, for a whim, raise all the philosophers in Paris against us, would you?"

"Oh, heavens! and what will my sister Jeanne say?"

"Is she so much attached to Gilbert?" asked Monsieur de Sartines.

"Indeed she is."

"Well, in that case, you must resort to gentle means; coax Monsieur Rousseau, and, instead of letting Gilbert be taken from him by force, he will give him up voluntarily."

"As well set us to tame a bear."

"It is perhaps not so difficult a task as you imagine. Do not despair: he is fond of pretty faces; that of the countess is very handsome, and Mademoiselle Chon's is not unpleasing. Let me see—the countess will make a sacrifice for her whim?"

"She will make a hundred."

"Would she consent to fall in love with Rousseau?"

“If it is absolutely necessary.”

“It will perhaps be useful; but to bring the parties together, we shall need a third person. Are you acquainted with any one who knows Rousseau?”

“Monsieur de Conti.”

“Won’t do; he distrusts princes. We want a nobody, a scholar, a poet.”

“We never see people of that sort.”

“Have I not met Monsieur de Jussieu at the countess’s?”

“The botanist?”

“Yes.”

“I’ faith, I believe so; he comes to Trianon, and the countess lets him ravage her flower-beds.”

“That is your man; and Jussieu is a friend of mine too.”

“Then the thing is done.”

“Almost.”

“I shall get back my Gilbert, then?”

Monsieur de Sartines mused for a moment.

“I begin to think you will,” said he, “and without violence, without noise. Rousseau will deliver him up to you, bound hand and foot.”

“Do you think so?”

“I am sure of it.”

“And what must be done to bring this about?”

“The merest trifle. You have, no doubt, a piece of vacant ground towards Meudon or Marly?”

“Oh! no want of that. I know ten such between Luciennes and Bougival.”

“Well, get built upon it — what shall I call the thing? — a philosopher’s trap.”

“Excuse me, what was it you said?”

“I said, a philosopher’s trap.”

“*Pardieu!* and how is that built?”

“I will give you a plan of it; rest satisfied. And now, let us be off; we begin to be noticed. To the hôtel, coachman!”

CHAPTER LXIV.

THE TWO FÊTES.

THE important events of history are to the novelist what gigantic mountains are to the traveller. He surveys them, he skirts their foot, he salutes them as he passes, but he does not climb them. In like manner we shall survey, skirt, and salute that august ceremony, the marriage of the dauphiness at Versailles. The ceremonial of France is the only chronicle that ought to be consulted in such a case. It is not, in fact, in the splendour of the Versailles of Louis XV., in the description of the court-dresses, the liveries, the pontifical ornaments, that our particular history—that modest follower who takes a by-path leading along the high-road of the history of France—would find anything to pick up. Let us leave the ceremony to be performed amidst the brilliant sunshine of a fine day in May, let us leave the illustrious spectators to retire in silence, and to describe or comment on the marvels of the exhibition which they had just witnessed, and let us return to our peculiar events and personages, which also have, historically speaking, a certain value.

The king, weary of the ceremonies, and especially of the dinner, which had been long, and was an exact imitation of that given on the marriage of the great dauphin, son of Louis XIV.,—the king retired to his apartments at nine o'clock, and dismissed everybody, except Monsieur de la Vauguyon, the tutor of the princes of France. This nobleman, a great friend of the Jesuits, whom he hoped to restore to favour, by the aid of Madame Dubarry, saw part

"The fact is, he understands them well."

"It is to you that he owes all this."

"Your Majesty gives me more credit than is due to me, in attributing to me any part, howsoever small, of the advantages that monsieur le dauphin has derived from his studies."

"Truly, duke, I think monsieur le dauphin will indeed be a good king, a good ruler, a good *pater familias*. "Speaking of that," said the king, "I ask you, will he be a good *pater familias*?"

"Ah, sire," innocently replied Monsieur de la Vauguyon, "since all the virtues are implanted in the heart of monsieur le dauphin, I have no doubt that special virtue is there, among the others."

"You do not understand me, duke," said Louis XV. "I ask you, will he be a good family man?"

"Sire, I confess, I do not fully understand your Majesty. In what sense do you use the term?"

"Why, in the sense — in the sense — you certainly have read your Bible, monsieur le duc?"

"Certainly, sire, I have read it."

"Well, you know the patriarchs, do you not?"

"Doubtless."

"Will he be a good patriarch?"

Monsieur looked at the king as if he had been speaking in Hebrew, and toyed with his hat.

"Sire," said he, "all he wishes is to be a great king."

"Pardon, monsieur le duc," insisted the king; "I see that you still do not comprehend me."

"Nevertheless, sire, I am doing my best."

"In short," said the king, "I will speak more plainly. Let's see,— you know the dauphin as well as if he were your own child, do you not?"

"Oh, yes, sire; certainly."

"His tastes?"

"Yes."

"His passions?"

“Oh, as to his passions, that is another thing. Had he had any, I should have thoroughly eradicated them. But, happily, I have not had this trouble; monseigneur is without passions.”

“You said ‘happily’?”

“Sire, is it not fortunate?”

“Then he has none?”

“Passions? No, sire.”

“Not one?”

“Not one, I assure you.”

“Well, that is exactly what I feared. He will be a good king, a good ruler, but he will not be a good patriarch.”

“Alas, sire, you never advised me to make a good patriarch of monsieur le dauphin.”

“Then I have made a mistake. I ought to have remembered that some day he would marry. But, although he has now no passions, you do not entirely despair of him?”

“How?”

“I mean you do not think him incapable of having them sometime.”

“Sire, I am afraid that will be the case.”

“How, you are afraid?”

“Truly,” said the poor duke, pitifully, “your Majesty is placing me on the rack.”

“Monsieur de la Vauguyon,” said the king, beginning to get impatient, “I ask you plainly if, with or without passion, Monsieur le Duc de Berry will make a good husband. I lay aside any qualifications for a *pater familias*, and I do not press the question of his being a patriarch.”

“Well, sire, I cannot exactly answer your Majesty as to that.”

“What! you cannot answer me?”

“No; truly, I do not know myself.”

“You do not know!” cried Louis XV., with an expression of astonishment, which made Monsieur de la Vauguyon’s wig tremble on his head.

“Sire, Monsieur le Duc de Berry lived under your

Majesty's roof in the innocence of a child devoted to study."

"Ah, monsieur, this child will study no longer; he is to be married."

"Sire, I was the tutor of monseigneur."

"Truly, monsieur, it was your duty to teach him all he ought to know."

And Louis XV. threw himself back in his chair, shrugging his shoulders.

"I suspected it," added he, with a sigh.

"My God! sire."

"You are cognisant with the history of France, are you not, Monsieur de la Vauguyon?"

"Sire, I always believed myself to be so, and always shall, until your Majesty shall tell me such is not the case."

"Ah, well, then, you must know what happened to me the night of my marriage."

"No, sire, I do not know."

"Ah, heavens! do you know nothing, then?"

"If your Majesty would tell me this thing which I do not know."

"Listen, and let this teach you a lesson, as regards my two other grandsons, duke."

"I am listening, sire."

"I, also, had been brought up as you have brought up the dauphin, under the care of my grandfather. My tutor was Monsieur de Villeroy, a noble man, indeed a very noble man, like yourself, duke. It would have been better to have allowed me to share the society of my uncle, the regent, oftener. But, no; the innocence of my education, as you say, duke, had made me neglect the study of innocence. However, I married; and when a king marries, monsieur le duc, it affects every one."

"Oh, yes; I begin to understand you."

"Indeed, that is fortunate. I will, then, continue. Monsieur le Cardinal sounded me on my patriarchal in-

clinations. I had indeed no inclinations of that sort, and, moreover, was so innocent as not to fear that the regency of France would fall into the female line. Fortunately, Monsieur le Cardinal consulted Monsieur de Richelieu on the subject. It was a delicate matter, but Monsieur de Richelieu was a master spirit in cases of this kind. Monsieur de Richelieu had a bright idea. There was a girl, Lamaure or Lemoure, I don't know which, who made fine pictures, she was told to paint a succession of views; you understand?"

"No, sire."

"How shall I designate them? Country scenes?"

"Something after the style of Teniers?"

"Better than that; primitive."

"Primitive?"

"Natural, I think that is the word at last. You understand, now?"

"What!" cried Monsieur de la Vauguyon, blushing, "did any one dare present to your Majesty—"

"And you speak of presenting something to me, duke?"

"But that your Majesty might see."

"It was necessary that my Majesty should look, that is all."

"Well?"

"Well, I looked."

"And?"

"And as man is essentially imitative, I imitated."

"Really, sire, it was a clever contrivance,—quite excellent, although dangerous for a young man."

The king looked at the Duc de la Vauguyon with a smile, which would have been cynical had it not appeared on the most spiritual mouth in the world. "Let us talk no more of danger, now," said he; "let us return to what we have to do."

"Ah!"

"Do you know what it is?"

“No, sire; your Majesty will confer a favour on me by telling me.”

“Well, it is this. You must go and find monsieur le dauphin, who is receiving the final congratulations of the gentlemen, while madame is receiving those of the ladies.”

“Yes, sire.”

“Take a candle with you, and lead monsieur le dauphin aside.”

“Yes, sire.”

“You will show YOUR PUPIL,” the king emphasised these two words, “you will show your pupil the room at the end of the new corridor.”

“No one has the key that belongs to it, sire.”

“Because I kept it, monsieur; I foresaw what would happen to-day. Here is the key.”

Monsieur de la Vauguyon took it, trembling.

“I wish to inform you, monsieur le duc, that this gallery contains twenty pictures, which I have had placed there.”

“Ah, sire, yes, yes.”

“Yes, monsieur le duc; embrace your pupil, open the door for him at the end of the corridor, place the key in his hand, wish him good-evening, and tell him that he may have twenty minutes in which to return to the door of his room,—a minute for each picture.”

“Ah, sire, I understand.”

“It is well; good-evening, Monsieur de la Vauguyon.”

“Your Majesty is good enough to pardon me?”

“But I do not know about that, for, but for me, you would have accomplished fine things in this family.”

The door closed upon monsieur the governor.

The king rang his private bell.

Lebel appeared.

“My coffee,” said the king. “By the way, Lebel.”

“Sire?”

“When you have given me my coffee, go back to Monsieur de la Vauguyon, who has gone to pay his respects to monsieur le dauphin.”

“I will go to him, sire.”

“But wait until I tell you why you must go.”

“Certainly, sire; only my haste to fulfil your Majesty’s commands is such—”

“Very well; then follow Monsieur de la Vauguyon.”

“Yes, sire.”

“He is so troubled, so sad, that I fear the effect of his emotion on monsieur le dauphin.”

“And what must I do, sire, if he is affected?”

“Nothing; come and report to me, that is all.”

Lebel placed the coffee near the king, who began to sip it slowly.

Then the historical *valet-de-chambre* went out. A quarter of an hour afterward he reappeared.

“Well, Lebel,” said the king.

“Sire, Monsieur de la Vauguyon has just been to the new corridor, taking the arm of monseigneur.

“Well, after that?”

“He did not seem very sad; on the contrary, he rolled his little eyes very briskly.”

“Good. After that?”

“He took a key from his pocket, gave it to monsieur le dauphin, who opened the door, and went into the corridor.”

“Then?”

“Then monsieur le duc put the candle into monseigneur’s hand, and said to him in a low voice, but not so low but that I could hear him:—

“Monseigneur, the wedding chamber is at the end of this gallery the key to which I have just given you. The king wishes you to take twenty minutes to reach this chamber.”

“What!” said the prince, ‘twenty minutes? It is scarcely twenty seconds away from here.’

“Monseigneur,” answered Monsieur de la Vauguyon, ‘here ends my authority. I have no more lessons for you, only this last piece of advice. Look at the walls on

the right and left of this gallery, and I assure your Highness that it will take you twenty minutes to do so.' "

"Not so bad!"

"Then, sire, Monsieur de la Vauguyon made a deep bow, and it seemed as if his piercing eyes would penetrate the corridor; then he left monseigneur at the door."

"And monseigneur went in, I suppose?"

"There, sire, see the light in the gallery? It has been moving around at least quarter of an hour."

"Come, come! it disappears," said the king, after a few minutes had passed, his eyes riveted on the window. "I also had twenty minutes allotted to me, but I remember at the end of five I was with my bride. Alas! the same may be said of monsieur le dauphin, as of the second Racine: 'He is the grandson of his grandfather.' "

CHAPTER LXV.

THE WEDDING-NIGHT.

THE dauphin opened the door of the wedding-chamber, or rather, of the ante-chamber which led to it.

The archduchess, in a long, white robe, lay in the gilded bed, barely indented by the light weight of her fragile and delicate form; and, strange fact, could one have read on her forehead, across the cloud of sadness which rested upon it, one might have found, in place of the pleasant expectation of the betrothed, the terror of a young girl threatened by one of those dangers apprehended in advance, and often endured with more courage than had they not been foreseen. Near the bed, Madame de Noailles sat. The ladies were standing in another part of the room, ready for the first gesture of the lady of honour, to tell them to withdraw. She, constant to the laws of etiquette, waited passively for the coming of the dauphin. But, as if this time all the laws of etiquette and of ceremony must yield to a cruel caprice of fate, there was no one to conduct monsieur le dauphin to the bridal chamber; for it was not known that his Highness, in accordance with the plans of Louis XV., would have to come through the new corridor, while they were waiting for him in another ante-chamber.

The chamber which monsieur le dauphin had entered was empty, and the door which led to the bed-chamber being half open, it came to pass that monsieur le dauphin could see and hear all that was going on in the chamber.

He waited, looking in, and listening attentively.

Madame la dauphine's voice was raised clear and sweet, although slightly trembling.

“By what entrance will monsieur le dauphin come in?” she asked.

“By this door, madame,” said the Duchesse de Noailles.

And she pointed to a door, opposite the one where monsieur le dauphin was standing.

“And what noise do I hear from this window?” added the dauphiness. “I should think it was the sound of the sea.”

“It is the noise of innumerable spectators, who are walking in the light of the illumination, and are waiting for the fireworks.”

“The illumination,” said the dauphiness, with a sad smile. “It is needed to-night, for the sky is very clouded. Did you see it, madame?”

At this moment, the dauphin, tired of waiting, softly pushed the door open, put his head in the opening, and asked if he might come in.

Madame de Noailles uttered a cry, for she did not recognise the dauphin at first. The dauphiness, agitated by the various emotions which had excited her, in that nervous condition in which we are all so easily frightened, seized Madame de Noailles by the arm.

“It is I, madame,” said the dauphin; “do not be afraid.”

“But why do you come in at that door?” asked Madame de Noailles.

“Because,” said the king, Louis XV., putting his cynical head through the half-opened door, in his turn, “because Monsieur de la Vauguyon, true Jesuit that he is, knows too much Latin, mathematics, and geography, and not enough of other things.”

At the presence of the king, coming so unexpectedly, the dauphiness glided from the bed, and stood up, enveloped in her ample robe, which covered her from her feet to her neck, as completely as the stole of a Roman matron.

“It is easy to see how thin she is,” murmured Louis XV. “To the devil with Monsieur de Choiseul, for choosing, among all the archduchesses, one like her!”

"Your Majesty," said Madame de Noailles, "can see, as far as I am concerned, that etiquette has been strictly observed. There is no one beside monsieur le dauphin."

"I take all the blame of the violation of that part of the etiquette on myself," said Louis XV, "since it is I who have caused it to be done. But as the occasion for such a course was serious, my dear Madame de Noailles, I hope you will pardon me."

"I do not understand what your Majesty means."

"Let us go away together, duchess, and I will explain that. Now, let us see that these children go to bed."

The dauphiness took a few steps away from the bed, and seized Madame de Noailles' arm in more fear than at first.

"Oh, pity me, madame," said she, "I shall die of shame!"

"Sire," said Madame de Noailles, "madame la dauphine entreats to be allowed to-night to go to bed like any common woman."

"The devil! are you asking that, Madame l'Etiquette?"

"Sire, I know it is opposed to the laws of the ceremonial of France; but think of the archduchess."

Indeed, Marie Antoinette, erect, pale, leaning on the brass rod at the back of a chair for support, looked the image of affright, except for the chattering of her teeth, and the cold sweat running down her face.

"Oh, I will not oppose the dauphiness on this point," said Louis XV., a prince as great a hater of ceremony as Louis XIV. was an eager supporter of it. "We will retire, duchess; besides, there are cracks in the door, and it will be even funnier."

The dauphin heard his grandfather's last words, and turned red.

The dauphiness also heard, but she did not take in his meaning.

The king, Louis XV., embraced his daughter-in-law and went out, taking with him the Duchess de Noailles, and

laughing that mocking laugh so sad to those who do not share its merriment. The others present went out by the other door. The two young people were alone.

There was a moment's silence.

Then the young prince drew near Marie Antoinette. His heart beat violently; he felt the hot blood excited by youth and love coursing through his breast, his temples, even the veins of his hands. But he saw his grandfather behind the door, and that cynical glare penetrating even to the nuptial alcove, checked the dauphin, already quite timid and awkward by nature.

"Madame," said he, looking at the archduchess, "are you suffering? You are very pale, and I should think that you are trembling."

"Monsieur," said she, "I will not conceal from you the strange agitation which is troubling me. There must be some terrible storm impending; a storm always exerts a dreadful influence over me."

"Ah, do you think that we are threatened with a hurricane?" said the dauphin.

"Oh, I am sure of it, I am sure of it! my whole body shakes. Just see me!"

And indeed, the poor princess's frame seemed to shake under the electric shocks. At this moment, as if to fulfil her presentiments, a furious gust of wind—one of those mighty tempests that raise the waves of the sea, and bare the mountains, like the first cry of the coming hurricane,—filled the castle with its uproar, and went rushing through the galleries and corridor. Leaves torn from their branches, branches torn from the trees, statues torn from their pedestals, the protracted, mighty clamour of a hundred thousand spectators, scattered through the gardens, a dismal and endless roar, composed at this moment the wildest and saddest harmony that ever struck mortal ears. Then a sinister crackling followed the roar; it was the glass in the windows, which, broken into a thousand pieces, fell on the marble staircases and cornices, producing this

abrupt and startling noise, which grated on the ear as it travelled along through space. The wind had, at the same time, torn off one of the window blinds, which beat against the wall like the gigantic wing of a bird of night.

Wherever in the palace the windows were open, the lights were extinguished, put out by the wind.

The dauphin went to the window, probably to close the blind, but the dauphiness stopped him.

"Oh, monsieur, monsieur, for pity's sake," said she, "do not open the window, or our candles will go out, and I shall die of fear!"

The dauphin stopped.

Across the curtain which he had drawn could be seen the tops of the trees of the park, all torn and broken, as if some invisible giant had seized their trunks in the darkness with his arm, and had shaken them.

All the illuminations were extinguished. Then large, black clouds might be seen rushing along in the sky, and crashing against each other like a company of lances in a battle.

The dauphin stood pale and erect, one hand resting on the window casement. The dauphiness fell on a chair, sighing.

"You are afraid, madame?" said the dauphin.

"Oh, yes; but your presence reassures me. Oh, what a tempest! what a tempest! All the illuminations are out!"

"Yes," said Louis, "the wind blows south-southeast, and that is the wind that indicates the fiercest hurricanes. If it keeps on, I don't see how they can have the fireworks."

"Oh, monsieur, why should they have them? No one would stay in the garden at such a time as this!"

"Ah, madame, you do not know the French; they must have their fireworks, and these will be fine. The engineer showed me the plan of them. Ah! wait, unless I am mistaken, there are the first rockets."

Indeed, shining like long serpents of fire, the rockets of

which he spoke rushed up toward the sky; but, at the same time, as if the storm had taken these shining jets as a challenge, a flash of lightning, which seemed to rend the heavens, wound among the artificial pieces, and mingled its blue light with the red glare of the rockets.

“In truth,” said the archduchess, “it is impious of man thus to mock God.”

These preliminary rockets had preceded the firing of the other fireworks only by a few seconds; the engineer saw that he must hurry, and he set off several of the first pieces, which called forth shouts of joy. But as there was actually a contest going on between heaven and earth, as if, as the archduchess had said, man had committed an impiety towards his God, the storm, infuriated, overwhelmed the noise of the people with its own turmoil, and all the floods of heaven opening at once, rushed down in torrents of rain from the clouds above.

The wind had extinguished the illuminations, the water put out the fireworks.

“Ah, how unfortunate!” said the dauphin; “there are the fireworks a complete failure.”

“Eh, monsieur,” replied Marie Antoinette, sadly, “has not everything been a failure since my arrival in France?”

“How so, madame?”

“Have you seen Versailles?”

“Certainly, madame; did you not like it?”

“Oh, had Versailles been to-day as it was in the time of your illustrious ancestor, Louis XIV., I should like it! But in what condition have we found Versailles? Tell me. Everywhere ruin and mourning. Oh, yes, the tempest is but in harmony with the festival prepared for me. Is it not fitting for a storm to arise to conceal from our people the wretchedness of our palace? Is not the night suitable and welcome which conceals these paths overgrown with grass, these groups of dirty Tritons, these empty fountains, these mutilated statues? Yes, yes, blow south wind; roar, ye tempest; rush on, ye clouds; hide

from all eyes the strange reception that France gives to a daughter of the Cæsars on the day on which she gives her hand to her future king!"

The dauphin, plainly embarrassed, for he did not know how to retort to these reproaches, and, above all, could not be in sympathy with this lofty melancholy, so different from his own nature, for reply merely sighed.

"I trouble you," said Marie Antoinette. "Do not think it is my pride which prompts these words; no, no, it is nothing of the sort. Had I only been shown this Trianon, so smiling, so shady, so filled with flowers,—even there, alas! this pitiless storm has stripped the trees and disturbed the fountains,—I should be happy in that charming nest; but ruins appal me, they are repugnant to my youth; and, moreover, this dreadful storm will make them even worse."

Another blast, more frightful than the first, shook the palace. The princess sprang up in terror.

"Oh, my God! tell me the danger is over, that nothing can happen. I am dying of fright!"

"There is none, madame; Versailles, built in terraces, cannot attract the lightning. If it should strike, it would probably hit the chapel, which has a sharp roof, or the little château, which is pointed. You know that points attract the electric fluid, while flat surfaces, on the contrary, repel it."

"No," cried Marie Antoinette, "I do not know, I do not know!"

Louis took the cold and trembling hand of the archduchess. At that moment a pale flash flooded the chamber with livid, purple light. Marie Antoinette cried aloud and repelled the dauphin.

"But, madame," cried he, "what is the matter?"

"Oh," said she, "you appeared to me in the light of that flash, pale, fainting, and bloody! I think I saw a vision."

"It is merely the reflection of the sulphurous fire, and I can explain to you—"

A frightful peal of thunder, whose echoes prolonged themselves until it reached its height, then died away, and was lost in the distance,— this fearful peal of thunder cut short the scientific explanation which the young man was so calmly preparing to give to his royal wife.

“Come, madame,” said he, after a moment’s silence, “courage, I beg you! Let us not yield to the fears of the ignorant. These physical disturbances are only certain natural conditions. It is no more wonderful than a calm atmosphere; only calm and storm follow each other. Calm is troubled by the commotion; and the commotion is stilled by the calm. After all, this is only a storm, and a storm is one of the most natural and frequent of the phenomena of the creation. I do not know why one should fear it.”

“Oh, by itself, perhaps, it would not have frightened me so; but this storm, coming on our wedding day,— does it not seem to you an evil omen, in connection with the others that have followed me since I came to France?”

“What are you saying, madame?” cried the dauphin, moved, despite himself, by a superstitious fear. “Did you say ‘omens’?”

“Yes, yes; fearful, bloody ones!”

“And these omens, tell me, madame; I am usually credited with a strong, cool, spirit; perhaps I may have the good luck to overcome and vanquish these omens that frighten you.”

“Monsieur, I passed my first night in France at Strasburg; I was given a large room lit by torches, for it was night. When the torches were lit their light showed me a wall dripping with blood. However, I had sufficient courage to go to the panels and examine these red tints closely. The walls were hung with tapestry, representing the Murder of the Innocents. Everywhere despair, with its mournful looks, the murderers with blazing eyes on all sides, the shining of axes and swords; everywhere tears, mothers’ cries, groans of anguish, seemed to break forth from that prophetic wall, which, from having looked upon

so intently, seemed to me to have life. Frozen with fear, I could not sleep. Tell me, see, is not that a sad omen?"

"For a lady of olden times, madame, possibly; but surely not for a princess in this enlightened age."

"Monsieur, this age is full of misfortune; my mother has told me so,—as the sky above is full of sulphur, flames, and desolation. Oh, that is the cause of my fear; that is why every omen seems to me to be a warning!"

"Madame, no danger threatens the throne we are ascending; we live, we kings, in a realm above the clouds. The thunderbolt is at our feet, and when it falls to the earth, we are the ones who hurl it."

"Alas! alas! it has not been so foretold to me."

"And what has been foretold to you?"

"Something terrible, fearful."

"Some one has foretold this to you?"

"Rather, I have been made to see it."

"See?"

"Yes, I have seen, seen, I tell you, and this image has stayed in my soul,—stayed so persistently that there is not a day in which I do not shudder as I think of it, not a night in which I do not see it in my dreams."

"And can you not tell me what you have seen? Have they compelled you to silence?"

"No, no one has compelled me. Listen, it is impossible to describe: it was a machine raised above the ground like a scaffold; but to that scaffold were fitted something like the two poles of a ladder, and between these two poles glided a knife, a cleaver, and an axe. I saw that, and, strange to relate, I saw my own head under the knife. The knife glided between the two poles, and separated my head from my body, and it fell and rolled on the ground. That is what I have seen, monsieur; that is what I have seen!"

"Pure hallucination, madame," said the dauphin. "I know almost all the instruments of punishment by which

death is given, and one like that is not in existence; so be reassured."

"Alas!" said Marie Antoinette, "I cannot banish this hateful thought, whatever I may do."

"You will succeed, madame," said the dauphin, approaching his wife; "from this moment you have near you a loving friend, an eager protector."

The dauphin again drew near the princess, and she could feel his breath against her cheek. At that moment the door by which the dauphin had entered was opened, and a curious, eager gaze, that of Louis XV., penetrated the shade of this large room, which the only two remaining candles scarcely lit, running in drops down the vermillion chandelier.

The old king opened his mouth, doubtless for the purpose of giving his grandson a few words of encouragement, when a crash which cannot be described filled all the palace, accompanied this time by the lightning which had preceded the other claps of thunder. At the same time a column of white smoke, crossed with green, passed before the window, breaking all the window-panes, and crushing a statue placed under the balcony. Then, after a frightful noise, it ascended to the sky and disappeared like a meteor.

The two candles went out, smothered by the gust of wind that entered the chamber.

The dauphin, frightened, tottering, dazzled, drew back until he reached the wall, where he stayed, leaning against it. The dauphiness, half fainting, fell on the steps of her *prie-dieu*, where she remained, shrouded in terror. Louis XV., trembling, thought the earth was going to swallow him up, and, followed by Lebel, he hastened to return to his deserted apartments.

The dauphiness, her head in her hands, prayed, weeping.

The dauphin looked with a gloomy and vacant air at the water, which was pouring into the room through the broken glass, and which reflected on the carpet the bluish lightning flashes, which continued for several hours.

Meanwhile, the people of Versailles and Paris fled like a flock of frightened birds, scattered over the gardens, in the roads, in the woods, pursued in all directions by thick hail, which beat down the flowers in the gardens, the foliage in the forest, the wheat and the barley in the fields. By morning, however, all this chaos was reduced to order, and the first rays of light, darting from between copper-coloured clouds, displayed to view the ravages of the nocturnal hurricane.

Versailles was no longer to be recognised. The ground had imbibed that deluge of water, the trees had absorbed that deluge of fire; everywhere were seas of muddy water, and trees broken, twisted, calcined, by that serpent with burning grip called lightning. As soon as it was light, Louis XV., whose terror was so great that he could not sleep, ordered Lebel, who had never left him during the night, to dress him. He then proceeded to the bridal-chamber, and, pushing open the door, shuddered on perceiving the future queen of France reclining on a *prie-dieu*, pale, and with eyes swollen and violet-coloured, — like those of the sublime Magdalen of Rubens. Her terror, caused by the hurricane, had at length been suspended by sleep, and the first dawn of morning which stole into the apartment tinged with religious respect her long, white robe with an azure hue. At the further end of the chamber, in an arm-chair pushed back to the wall, and surrounded by a pool of water which had forced its way through the shattered windows, reposed the dauphin of France, pale as his young bride, and, like her, having the perspiration of nightmare on his brow. The nuptial bed was in precisely the same state as on the preceding evening.

Louis XV. knit his brow; a pain, keener than any he had yet felt, darted through that brow like a red-hot iron. He shook his head, heaved a deep sigh, and returned to his apartments, more gloomy and more affrighted, perhaps, at that moment than he had been during the night.

On the 30th of May,—that is, on the second day after that tremendous night, that night fraught with presages and warnings,—Paris celebrated in its turn the marriage festival of its future sovereign. The whole population poured, in consequence, towards the Place Louis XV., where were to be exhibited the fireworks,—that necessary accompaniment to every great public solemnity, which the Parisian accepts scoffingly, but which he cannot dispense with. The spot was judiciously chosen. Six hundred thousand spectators could move about there at their ease. Around the equestrian statue of Louis XV. had been erected a circular scaffolding, which, by raising the fireworks ten or twelve feet above the ground, enabled all the spectators in the place to see them distinctly. The Parisians arrived, according to custom, in groups, and spent some time in choosing the best places, an inalienable privilege of the first comers. Boys found trees, grave men posts, women the railings of fences and temporary stands, erected in the open air, as usual at all Parisian festivities, by adventurous speculators, whose fertile imagination allows them to change their mode of speculation every day. About seven o'clock, along with the earliest of the spectators, arrived several parties of police.

The duty of watching over the safety of Paris was not performed by the French Guards, to whom the city authorities would not grant the gratuity of a thousand crowns demanded by their colonel, the Marshal Duke de Biron.

That regiment was both feared and liked by the population, by whom each member of the corps was regarded at once as a Cæsar, and a Mandrin. The French Guards, terrible on the field of battle, inexorable in the fulfilment of their functions, had, in time of peace and out of service, a frightful character for brutality and misconduct. On duty they were handsome, brave, intractable; and their evolutions delighted women and awed husbands; but, when dispersed among the crowd as mere individuals, they be-

came the terror of those whose admiration they had won the day before, and severely persecuted the people whom they would have to protect on the morrow. Now, the city, finding in its old grudge against these night-brawlers and sharpers a reason for not giving a thousand crowns to the French Guards,—the city, we say, sent merely its civil force, upon the specious pretext that in a family festivity, like that in preparation, the usual guardians of the family ought to be sufficient. The French Guards, on leave, therefore, mingled among the groups mentioned above, and, as licentious as they would under other circumstances have been severe, they produced among the crowd, in their quality of soldier-citizens, all those little irregularities which they would have repressed with the butts of their muskets, with kicks and cuffs, nay, even with taking the offenders into custody, if their commander, their Cæsar Biron, had had a right to call them on that evening soldiers.

The shrieks of the women, the grumbling of the citizens, the complaints of the hucksters, whose cakes and gingerbread were eaten without being paid for, raised a sham tumult preparatory to the real commotion which could not fail to take place when six hundred thousand sight-loving persons should be assembled on that spot, and constituted so animated a scene that the Place Louis XV., about eight o'clock in the evening, presented much the appearance of one of Tenier's pictures on a large scale, and with French instead of Dutch merry-makers. After the gamins, or street boys of Paris, at once the most impatient and the idlest in the known world, had taken or clambered up to their places; after the citizens and the populace had settled themselves in theirs,—the carriages of the nobility and the financiers arrived. No route had been marked out for them; and they therefore entered the Place at random by the Rue de la Madeleine and the Rue St. Honoré, setting down at the new buildings, as they were called, those who had received invitations for the windows and balconies of

the governor's house, from which an excellent view could be obtained of the fireworks.

Such of the persons in carriages as had not invitations, left their equipages at the corner of the Place, and, preceded by their footmen, mingled in the crowd, already very dense, but in which there was still room for any one who knew how to conquer it. It was curious to observe with what sagacity those lovers of sights availed themselves, in their ambitious progress, of every inequality of ground. The very wide, but as yet unfinished, street which was to be called the Rue Royale, was intersected here and there by deep ditches, on the margins of which had been heaped the mould thrown out of them, and other rubbish. Each of these little eminences had its group, looking like a loftier billow rising above the level of that human ocean.

From time to time this wave, propelled by other waves behind it, toppled over, amid the laughter of the multitude, not yet so crowded as to cause such falls to be attended with danger, or to prevent those who fell from scrambling to their feet again.

About half-past eight all eyes, hitherto wandering in different directions, began to converge towards the same point, and to fix themselves on the scaffolding which contained the fireworks. It was then that elbows, plied without ceasing, commenced to maintain in good earnest the position they had gained, against the assaults of incessantly-reinforced invaders.

These fireworks, designed by Ruggieri, were intended to rival (a rivalship, by the way, which the storm two evenings before had rendered easy) those executed at Versailles by Torre, the engineer. It was known in Paris that Versailles had derived little pleasure from the royal liberality, which had granted fifty thousand francs for their exhibition, since the very first discharges had been extinguished by the rain, and as the weather was fine on the evening of the 30th of May, the Parisians reckoned upon a certain triumph over their neighbours of Versailles.

Besides, Paris expected much more from the old established popularity of Ruggieri, than from the recent reputation of Torre.

Moreover, the plan of Ruggieri, less capricious and less vague than that of his colleague, bespoke pyrotechnical intentions of a highly distinguished order. Allegory, which reigned supreme at that period, was coupled with the most graceful architectural style, and the scaffolding represented the ancient temple of Hymen, which, with the French, rivals in ever-springing youth the temple of Glory. It was supported by a gigantic colonnade, and surrounded by a parapet, at the angles of which dolphins, open-mouthed, only awaited the signal to spout forth torrents of flames. Facing the dolphins rose, majestically upon their urns, the Loire, the Rhone, the Seine, and the Rhine,—that river which we persist in naturalizing and accounting French in spite of all the world, and, if we may believe the modern lays of our friends, the Germans, in spite even of itself,—all four—we mean the rivers—ready to pour forth, instead of water, blue, white, green, and rose-coloured flames, at the moment when the colonnade should be fired.

Other parts of the works, which were to be discharged at the same time, were to form gigantic vases of flowers on the terrace of the temple of Hymen.

Lastly, still upon this same palace, destined to support so many different things, rose a luminous pyramid, terminated by the terrestrial globe. This globe, after emitting a rumbling noise like distant thunder, was to burst with a crash, and to discharge a mass of coloured girandoles.

As for the *bouquet*,—so important and indeed indispensable an accompaniment that no Parisian ever judges of fireworks but by the *bouquet*,—Ruggieri had separated it from the main body of the structure. It was placed towards the river, close to the statue, in a bastion crammed with spare rockets, so that the effect would be greatly improved by this additional elevation of six or eight yards,

which would place the foot of the sheaf as it were upon a pedestal.

Such were the details which had engrossed the attention of all Paris for a fortnight previous. The Parisians now watched with great admiration Ruggieri and his assistants passing like shades amidst the lurid lights of their scaffolding, and pausing, with strange gestures, to fix their matches and to secure their priming.

The moment, therefore, that the lanterns were brought upon the terrace of the building—an appearance which indicated the approach of the discharge—it produced a strong sensation in the crowd, and some rows of the least courageous recoiled, producing a long oscillation, which extended to the very extremities of the assembled multitude,

Carriages now continued to arrive in quick succession, and began to encroach more and more upon the Place,—the horses resting their heads upon the shoulders of the rear-most spectators, who began to feel uneasy at the close vicinity of these dangerous neighbours. Presently the crowd, every moment increasing, collected behind the carriages, so that it was not possible for them to withdraw from their position, even had they been desirous to do so, embedded as they were in this compact and tumultuous throng. Then might be seen—inspired by that audacity peculiar to the Parisians when in an encroaching mood, and which has no parallel except the long-suffering of the same people when encroached upon—French Guards, artisans, and lacqueys, climbing upon the roofs of these carriages, like shipwrecked mariners upon a rocky shore.

The illumination of the boulevards threw from a distance its ruddy glare upon the heads of the thousands of spectators, amidst whom the bayonet of a city official, flashing like lightning, appeared as rare as the ears of corn left standing in a field levelled by the reaper.

On either side of the new buildings, now the Hôtel Crillon and the Garde Meuble of the Crown, the carriages

of the invited guests — between which no precaution had been taken to leave a passage — had formed a triple rank which extended on one side from the boulevard to the Tuileries, and on the other from the boulevard to the Rue des Champs Élysées, turning like a serpent thrice doubled upon itself.

Along this triple row of carriages were seen, wandering like spectres on the banks of the Styx, such of the invited as were prevented by the carriages of those earlier on the ground from reaching the principal entrance. Stunned by the noise, and unwilling, especially the ladies, who were dressed in satin from head to foot, to step upon the dusty pavement, they were hustled to and fro by the waves of the populace, who jeered them for their delicacy, and, seeking a passage between the wheels of the carriages and the feet of the horses, crept onwards as well as they could to the place of their destination, — a goal as fervently desired as a haven of refuge by mariners in a storm.

One of these carriages arrived about nine o'clock, that is to say, a very few minutes before the time fixed for the commencement of the fireworks, in expectation of making its way towards the governor's door; but the attempt, so warmly disputed for some time back, had at this moment become extremely hazardous, if not impracticable. A fourth row of carriages had begun to form, reinforcing the first three, and the mettled horses, tormented by the crowd, had become furious, lashing out right and left upon the slightest provocation, and already causing several accidents unnoticed amidst the noise and bustle of the crowd.

Holding by the springs of this carriage, which was attempting to force its way through the concourse, walked a youth, pushing aside all comers who endeavoured to avail themselves of this means of locomotion, which he seemed to have confiscated for his exclusive use. When the carriage stopped the youth stepped aside, but without loosing his hold of the protecting spring, which he con-

tinued to grasp with one hand. He could thus overhear, through the open door, the animated conversation of the party in the vehicle.

A female head, attired in white, and adorned with a few natural flowers, leaned forward out of the carriage door. Immediately a voice exclaimed: —

“Come, Andrée, provincial that you are, you must not lean out in that manner, or, *mordieu!* you run a great risk of being kissed by the first bumpkin that passes. Don’t you see that our carriage is swimming as it were in the middle of this mob, just as if it were in the middle of the river. We are in the water, my dear, and dirty water it is; let us not soil ourselves by the contact.”

The young lady’s head was drawn back into the carriage.

“We cannot see anything from this, monsieur,” said she. “If our horses were to make a half-turn, we could see from the door of the carriage, and be almost as well off as if we were at the governor’s window.”

“Turn about a little, coachman,” cried the baron.

“It is impossible, Monsieur le Baron; I should be obliged to crush ten persons.”

“Well, *pardieu!* crush away !”

“Oh, monsieur !” exclaimed Andrée.

“Oh, father !” cried Philip.

“Who is that baron that talks of crushing poor folk ?” cried several threatening voices.

“*Parbleu!* it is I,” said Taverney, leaning out, and exhibiting as he did so a broad red ribbon crossed over his breast.

At that time people still paid some respect to broad ribbons—even to red ones. There was some grumbling, but on a descending scale.

“Wait, father, I will alight,” said Philip, “and see if there is any possibility of advancing.”

“Take care, brother, or you will be killed. Hark to the neighing of the horses, which are fighting with one another !”

“Say, rather, the roaring,” resumed the baron. “Stay! we will alight. Tell them to make way, Philip, and let us pass.”

“Ah, father!” said Philip, “you are quite a stranger to the Paris of the present day. Such lordly airs might have passed current formerly, but now-a-days they are but little heeded; and you have no wish to compromise your dignity, I am sure.”

“Still, when these saucy fellows know who I am—”

“My dear father,” said Philip, smiling, “were you the dauphin himself, they would not stir an inch for you. At this moment, particularly, I should fear the consequences of such a step, for I see the fireworks are about to commence.”

“Then we shall see nothing!” said Andrée, with vexation.

“It is your own fault, *pardieu!*” replied the baron; “you were upwards of two hours at your toilet.”

“Brother,” said Andrée, “could I not take your arm and place myself among the crowd?”

“Yes, yes, my sweet lady,” exclaimed several voices, touched with her beauty; “yes, come along; you are not very large, and we ’ll make room for you.”

“Should you like to come, Andrée?” asked Philip.

“Oh, yes!” said Andrée; and she sprang lightly from the carriage without touching the steps.

“Very well,” said the baron; “but I, who care not a straw about fireworks, will stay where I am.”

“Yes, remain here,” said Philip; “we will not go far, my dear father.”

In fact, the mob, ever respectful when not irritated by any passion, ever paying homage to that sovereign goddess called Beauty, opened to make way for Andrée and her brother; and a good-natured citizen, who, with his family, occupied a stone bench, desired his wife and daughter to make room for Andrée between them. Philip placed himself at his sister’s feet, who leaned with one hand on his

shoulder. Gilbert had followed them, and was stationed about four paces off, with his eyes riveted upon Andrée.

"Are you comfortably placed, Andrée?" asked Philip.

"Excellently," replied the young girl.

"See what it is to be handsome!" said the viscount, smiling.

"Yes, yes, handsome -- very handsome!" murmured Gilbert.

Andrée heard those words; but as they proceeded doubtless from the lips of one of the populace, she cared no more about them than an Indian god cares for the offering which a poor pariah lays at his feet.

CHAPTER LXVI.

THE FIREWORKS.

ANDRÉE and her brother had scarcely settled themselves in their new position when the first rockets pierced the clouds, and a prodigious shout arose from the crowd, thenceforward alive only to the spectacle which was exhibiting in the centre of the Place.

The commencement of the fireworks was magnificent, and in every respect worthy of the high reputation of Ruggieri. The decorations of the temple were progressively lighted up, and soon presented one sheet of flame. The air rang with plaudits; but these plaudits were soon succeeded by frantic cheers, when the gaping mouths of the dolphins and the urns of the rivers began to spout forth streams of fire of different colours, which crossed and intermingled with each other.

Andree, transported with astonishment at this sight, which has not its equal in the world,—that of a population of seven hundred thousand souls, frantic with delight in front of a palace in flames,—did not even attempt to conceal her feelings.

At three paces distant from her, hidden by the herculean shoulders of a porter who held his child aloft over his head, stood Gilbert, gazing at Andrée for her own sake, and at the fireworks because she was looking at them. Gilbert's view of Andrée was in profile; every rocket lighted up that lovely face, and made him tremble with delight. It seemed to him that the whole crowd shared in his admiration of the heavenly creature whom he adored. Andrée had never before seen Paris, or a crowd, or the

splendours of a public rejoicing; and her mind was stunned by the multiplicity of novel sensations which beset it at once.

On a sudden, a bright light burst forth and darted in a diagonal line towards the river. It was a bomb, which exploded with a crash, scattering the various coloured fires which Andrée admired.

“Look, Philip, how beautiful that is!” said she.

“Good heavens!” exclaimed her brother, without making her any reply, “how ill that last rocket was directed! It must certainly have deviated from its course; for, instead of describing a parabola, it went off almost horizontally.”

Philip had scarcely finished this expression of an uneasiness which began to be manifested in the agitation of the crowd, when a hurricane of flame burst from the bastion upon which were placed the *bouquet* and the spare fireworks. A crash equal to that of a hundred peals of thunder, crossing in all directions, bellowed through the Place; and, as if the fire had contained a discharge of grape-shot, it put to rout the nearest spectators, who for a moment felt the unexpected flame scorch their faces.

“The *bouquet* already! the *bouquet* already!” cried the more distant of the crowd. “Not yet! it is too early!”

“Already?” repeated Andrée. “Ah, yes; it is too early!”

“No,” said Philip, “no; it is not the *bouquet*, it is an accident, which in a moment will agitate this prodigious crowd, now so calm, like the ocean in a storm. Come, Andrée, let us return to our carriage; come along!”

“Oh, let me stay a little longer, Philip; it is so beautiful!”

“Andrée, we have not a moment to lose; follow me. It is the misfortune which I feared. Some stray rocket has set fire to the bastion. Hark! they are crushing one another yonder! Don’t you hear their cries? Those are not cries of joy, but shrieks of distress. Quick! quick! to the carriage. Gentlemen, gentlemen, allow us to pass.”

And Philip, throwing his arm round his sister's waist, drew her towards the place where he had left his father, who, uneasy on his side, and dreading, from the noise which he heard, a danger of the nature of which he could form no conception, although he was thoroughly convinced of its existence, put his head out of the carriage door, and looked about for his children. It was already too late, and the prediction of Philip was verified. The *bouquet*, composed of fifteen thousand fusees, exploded, scattering about in all directions, and pursuing the spectators like those fiery darts which are flung at the bulls in the arena to provoke them to fight.

The lookers-on, at first astonished, then terrified, recoiled from the force of mere instinct with resistless impetus, communicating the same movement to the myriads of spectators in the rear, who, breathless and suffocated, pressed backwards in their turn on those behind them. The scaffolding took fire; children shrieked; screaming women, almost stifled, raised them in their arms; and the police, thinking to silence the screamers, and to restore order by violence, struck right and left at random. All these combined causes made the waving sea of people which Philip spoke of fall like a water-spout on that corner of the Place where he was; and instead of rejoining the baron's carriage, as he calculated upon doing, the youth was hurried away by the mighty and irresistible current, of which no description could convey any idea; for individual strength, increased tenfold by terror and anxiety, was again augmented a hundredfold by the junction of the general strength.

At the moment when Philip drew Andrée away, Gilbert had resigned himself to the stream which carried them along; but he had not gone above twenty paces before a band of fugitives, turning to the left into the Rue de la Madeleine, surrounded Gilbert and swept him away, foaming with rage on finding himself separated from Andrée.

Andrée, clinging fast to Philip's arm, was inclosed in a

group which was striving to get out of the way of a carriage dragged along by a pair of furious horses. Philip saw it approaching swiftly and threateningly; the horses' eyes flashed fire, and they snorted foam from their nostrils. He made superhuman efforts to avoid it, but all in vain. He saw the crowd open behind him; he perceived the foaming heads of the two ungovernable animals; he saw them rear, like the two marble horses which guard the entrance of the Tuilleries, and, like the slave who is striving to subdue them, letting go Andrée's arm, and pushing her as far as he could out of the way of danger, he sprang up to seize the rein of the horse that was next to him. The animal reared a second time; Andrée saw her brother sink back, fall, and disappear from her sight. She shrieked, extended her arms, was hustled to and fro in the crowd, and in a moment found herself helpless, tottering, borne along like a feather by the wind, and just as incapable of resisting the force that was hurrying her away.

The stunning cries, far more terrible than those of the battlefield; the neighing of horses; the frightful noise of wheels, grinding now the pavement, now the bodies of the slain; the lurid flames of the scaffolds which were on fire; the sinister gleaming of swords drawn by some of the infuriated soldiers; and over all this ensanguined chaos, the bronze statue, tinged by the ruddy reflections, and seeming to preside over the carnage, — were more than was needed to disturb Andrée's reason and paralyse her strength. Besides, the power of a Titan would have been impotent in such a struggle, — a struggle for life and limb, of one against all. Andrée uttered a piercing shriek; a soldier, opening himself a passage through the crowd, was striking the people with his sword, and the weapon flashed over her head. She clasped her hands, like a shipwrecked mariner, when the last wave is passing over him, and exclaiming, "Oh, my God!" sank to the ground. Whoever fell in that scene might give himself up for lost!

But that terrible, that despairing shriek was heard and

answered. Gilbert, carried to a distance from Andrée, had by dint of struggling once more approached her. Bending beneath the same wave which had engulfed Andrée, he raised himself again, made a frantic leap at the sword which had unwittingly threatened her, grasped the throat of the soldier who was going to strike, and hurled him to the ground. Beside the soldier lay a female form dressed in white; he raised her up and bore her off as though he had been a giant.

When he felt that lovely form, that corpse perhaps, pressed to his heart, a gleam of pride lighted up his countenance, his force and courage rose with the circumstances, — he felt himself a hero! He flung himself and his burden into a stream of people, whose torrent would certainly have levelled a wall in their flight. Supported by this group, which lifted him up and bore him along with his lovely burden, he walked or rather rolled onwards for some minutes. All at once the torrent stopped, as if broken by some opposing obstacle. Gilbert's feet touched the ground, and not till then was he sensible of the weight of Andrée. He looked up to ascertain what the obstacle might be, and perceived that he was within a few steps of the Garde-Meuble. That mass of stone had broken the mass of flesh.

During that momentary and anxious halt, he had time to look at Andrée. Overcome by a sleep heavy as that of death, her heart had ceased to beat, her eyes were closed, and her face was of a violet tinge, like a white rose that is fading. Gilbert thought that she was dead. He shrieked in his turn, pressed his lips at first to her dress, to her hand, then, emboldened by her insensibility, he covered with kisses that cold face, those eyes swollen beneath their sealed lids. He blushed, wept, raved, strove to transfuse his soul into the bosom of Andrée, feeling astonished that his kisses, which might have warmed a marble statue, had no effect upon that inanimate form. All at once Gilbert felt her heart beat under his hand.

“She is saved!” exclaimed he, on perceiving the swart

and bloodstained mob dispersing, and hearing the imprecations, the shrieks, the sighs, the agony of the victims die away in the distance. "She is saved, and it is I who have saved her!"

The poor fellow, who stood leaning with his back against the wall, and his eyes turned towards the bridge, had not looked to his right. Before the carriages, which, long detained by the crowd, but now hemmed in less closely, began once more to move, and soon came on galloping as if coachmen and horses had been seized with a general frenzy, fled twenty thousand unfortunate creatures, mutilated wounded, bruised one against the other. Instinctively they fled close to the walls, against which the nearest of them were crushed. This mass swept away or suffocated all those who, having taken up their position near the Garde-Meuble, imagined that they had escaped the wreck. A fresh shower of blows, of living and dead bodies, rained on Gilbert. He found one of the recesses formed by the iron gates, and stationed himself there. The weight of the fugitives made the wall crack.

Gilbert, nearly stifled, felt ready to loose his hold, but with a last desperate effort, mustering all his strength, he encompassed Andrée's body with his arms, resting his head on the bosom of the young girl. One would have supposed that he meant to suffocate her whom he was protecting.

"Farewell," murmured he, biting rather than kissing her dress; "farewell!" And he raised his eyes to heaven, as if directing a last supplicating glance to it for assistance. Then a strange sight met his vision.

Mounted on a post, holding with his right hand by a ring let into the wall, while with his left hand he seemed to be rallying an army of fugitives, was a man, who, looking at the furious sea raging at his feet, sometimes dropped a word, sometimes made a gesture. At that word, at that gesture, some individual among the crowd might be seen to pause, struggle, and by a violent effort strive to reach the man. Others who had already reached him seemed to

recognise the new-comers as brothers, and assisted to drag them out of the crowd, raising, supporting, and drawing them towards them.

In this manner, by acting together, this knot had, like the pier of a bridge which divides and resists the water, succeeded in dividing the crowd and holding in check the flying masses.

Every moment fresh stragglers, seeming to rise out of the ground at those strange words and singular gestures swelled the retinue of this man. Gilbert raised himself by a last effort ; he felt that *there* was safety, for *there* was calmness and power. A last dying gleam from the burning scaffold, leaping up only to expire, fell upon his face. Gilbert uttered a cry of amazement : "Oh! let me die!" he murmured ; "let me die, but save her!"

Then with a sublime forgetfulness of self, raising the young girl in both his arms, he exclaimed, "Baron de Balsamo, save Mademoiselle Andrée de Taverney ! "

Balsamo heard that voice which cried to him, like that in the Bible, from the depths, he beheld a white figure raised above the devouring waves, he leaped from his post to the ground, crying, "This way!" His party overturned all that obstructed their course, and, seizing Andrée, still supported in Gilbert's sinking arms, he lifted her up, and, impelled by a movement of that crowd which he had ceased to repress, he bore her off, without once turning to look behind.

Gilbert endeavoured to utter a last word. Perhaps, after imploring the protection of this strange man for Andrée, he might have solicited it for himself ; but he had only strength to press his lips to the drooping arm of the young girl, and to snatch, with a wild and despairing grasp, a portion of her dress.

After that last kiss, after that final farewell, the young man had nothing left to live for ; he made no further struggle, but closing his eyes, sunk dying upon a heap of dead.

CHAPTER LXVII.

THE FIELD OF THE DEAD.

GREAT storms are always succeeded by calms, fearful in their very stillness, but bearing healing on their wings.

It was about two o'clock in the morning. The moon, wading between large white clouds which hovered over Paris, showed in strong relief by her wan and sickly light the inequalities of this sad spot, and the pits and holes in which so many of the fleeting crowd had found an untimely grave.

Here and there in the moonlight, which was obscured from time to time by the large white floating clouds we have mentioned, might be seen, on the margin of the slopes and in the ditches, heaps of corpses with disordered attire, stiffened limbs, livid and discoloured faces, and hands stretched out in an attitude of terror or of prayer.

In the centre of this place, a heavy tainted smoke, emitted from the burning embers of the timber, contributed to give to the Place Louis XV. the appearance of a battle-field.

Over this bloody and desolate plain flitted, with rapid and mysterious steps, shadowy figures, who stopped, looked stealthily round, bent down, and then fled. They were the robbers of the slain, attracted to their prey like vultures to the decaying carrion. They had not been able to rob the living, and they came to despoil the dead. Surprised at seeing themselves anticipated by their fellow robbers, they might be seen escaping sullenly and fearfully at the sight

of the tardy bayonets which menaced them. But the robber and the lazy watchman were not the only persons moving among the long ranks of the dead.

There were some there who, furnished with lanterns, might have been taken for curious lookers-on. Sad lookers-on, alas ! for they were parents and anxious friends, whose children, brothers, friends, or lovers had not returned home. They had come from great distances, for the dreadful news had already spread over Paris like a hurricane, scattering dismay and horror, and their anxiety had been quickly changed into active search. It was a sight perhaps more dreadful to behold than the catastrophe itself. Every expression was portrayed on these pale faces, from the despair of those who discovered the corpse of the beloved being, to the gloomy uncertainty of those who had found nothing, and who cast an anxious and longing glance towards the river, which flowed onwards with a monotonous murmur.

It was reported that many corpses had already been thrown into the river by the provostry of Paris, who wished to conceal the fearful number of deaths their guilty imprudence had occasioned.

Then, when they had satiated their eyes with this fruitless spectacle, and, standing ankle deep in the Seine, had watched with anguished hearts its dark waters flow past unburthened with the loved bodies of those whom they sought, they proceeded, lantern in hand, to explore the neighbouring streets, where it was said many of the wounded had dragged themselves, to seek for help, or at least to flee from the scene of their sufferings.

When, unfortunately, they found amongst the dead the object of their search,—the lost and wept-for friend,—then cries succeeded to their heart-rending surprise, and their sobs, rising from some new point of the bloody scene, were responded to by other and distant sobs.

At times the place resounded with noises of a different kind. All at once a lantern falls and is broken,—the

living has fallen senseless, on the dead, to embrace him for the last time.

There are yet other noises in this vast cemetery. Some of the wounded, whose limbs have been broken by the fall, whose breast has been pierced by the sword, or crushed by the weight of the crowd, utters a hoarse cry, or groans forth a prayer, and then those who hope to find in the sufferer a friend, hastily approach, but retire when they do not recognise him.

In the mean time, at the extremity of the Place, near the garden, a field-hospital is formed by the kindness and charity of the people. A young surgeon, known as such by the profusion of instruments which surround him, has the wounded men and women brought to him; he bandages their wounds, and while he tends them, he speaks to them in words which rather express hatred for the cause than pity for the effect.

To his two robust assistants, who pass the sufferers in bloody review before him, he cries incessantly:

“The women of the people, the men of the people, first! They can be easily recognised; they are almost always more severely wounded, certainly always less richly dressed.”

At these words, repeated after each dressing with a shrill monotony, a young man who, torch in hand, is seeking among the dead, has twice already raised his head. From a large wound which furrows his forehead a few drops of crimson blood are falling; one of his arms is supported by his coat, which he has buttoned over it; and his countenance, covered with perspiration, betrays deep and absorbing emotion.

At these words of the surgeon, which he has heard, as we have said, for the second time, he raises his head, and looking sadly on the mutilated limbs which the operator seems almost to gloat over:

“Oh, monsieur,” said he, “why do you make a choice among the victims?”

"Because," replied the surgeon, raising his head at this interruption, "because no one will care for the poor if I do not think of them, and the rich are always well looked after. Lower your lantern, and search upon the ground; you will find a hundred poor people for one rich or noble. In this catastrophe, with a good fortune which will in the end weary even Providence, the noble and the rich have paid the tribute they generally pay,—one in a thousand."

The young man raised his torch to a level with his bleeding forehead.

"Then I am that one," said he, without the least anger; "I, a gentleman, lost among so many others in the crowd, wounded in the forehead by a horse's hoof, and my left arm broken by falling into a pit. You say that the noble and the rich are sought after and cared for; you see plainly, however, that my wounds are not yet dressed."

"You have your hotel; your physician. Return home, since you can walk."

"I do not ask for your cares, monsieur; I seek my sister, a beautiful young girl of sixteen—killed probably, alas! though she is not of the people. She wore a white dress, and a chain with a cross round her neck. Though she has her hotel and her physician, answer me, for pity's sake, monsieur, have you seen her whom I seek?"

"Monsieur," said the young surgeon, with a feverish vehemence which showed that the ideas he expressed had long boiled within his breast, "monsieur, humanity is my guide. It is to her service I devote myself; and when I leave the noble on their bed of death to assist the suffering people, I obey the true laws of humanity, who is my goddess. All this day's misfortunes have been caused by you. They arose from your abuses, from your usurpations; therefore, bear the consequences. No, monsieur, I have not seen your sister."

And after this harsh apostrophe, the operator returned to his task. A poor woman had just been brought to him, whose two legs were fractured by a carriage.

“See!” he exclaimed, calling after Philip, who was rushing away, “see! do the poor bring their carriages to the public festivals to break the legs of the rich?”

Philip, who belonged to that class of the young nobility from which sprung the Lafayettes and Lamoths, had often professed the same maxims which terrified him in the mouth of this young man, and their application recoiled upon him like a judgment. His heart bursting with grief, he left the neighbourhood of the hospital and continued his sad search. He had not proceeded many steps, when, carried away by his grief, he could not repress a heart-rending cry of:

“Andrée! Andrée!”

At that moment there passed by him, walking with hasty steps, a man already advanced in years, dressed in a grey cloth coat and milled stockings, his right hand resting on a stick, while with the left he held one of those lanterns made of a candle enclosed in oiled paper.

Hearing Philip’s cry of grief, he guessed what he must be suffering, and murinured:

“Poor young man!”

But as he seemed to have come for the same purpose as himself, he passed on. Then all at once, as if he reproached himself for having passed unheeding by so much suffering, without attempting to console it:

“Monsieur,” said he, “pardon me for mingling my grief with yours; but those who are struck by the same blow should lean on each other for support. Besides, you may be useful to me. You have already sought for a considerable time, I see, as your light is nearly extinguished, and you must therefore be acquainted with the most fatal localities of the Place.”

“Oh, yes, monsieur, I know them!”

“Well, I also seek some one.”

“Then look first in the great ditch; you will find more than fifty corpses there.”

“Fifty! Just heaven! So many victims killed at a *fête!*”

"So many! Monsieur, I have already looked at a thousand faces, and have not yet found my sister."

"Your sister?"

"It was yonder, in that direction, that she was. I lost her near the bench. I have found the place since, but no trace of her was visible. I am about to recommence the search, beginning with the bastion."

"To which side did the crowd rush, monsieur?"

"Towards the new buildings, in the Rue de la Madeleine."

"Then it must have been towards this side?"

"Yes, and I therefore searched on this side first; but there were dreadful scenes here. Besides, although the tide flowed in that direction, a poor, bewildered woman soon loses her senses in such a scene: she knows not whither she goes, and endeavours to escape in the first direction that presents itself."

"Monsieur, it is not probable that she would struggle against the current. I am about to search the streets on this side; come with me, and, both together, we may perhaps find —"

"And whom do you seek? Your son?" asked Philip, timidly.

"No, monsieur; but a child whom I had almost adopted."

"And you allowed him to come alone?"

"Oh! he is a young man of eighteen or nineteen. He is master of his own actions, and as he wished to come, I could not hinder him; besides, we were far from expecting this horrible catastrophe. But your light is going out."

"Yes, monsieur, I see it."

"Come with me; I will light you."

"Thank you, — you are very good; but I fear I shall incommod you."

"Oh, do not fear, since I must have searched for myself. The poor child generally came home very punctually," continued the old man, proceeding in the direction of the streets; "but this evening I felt a sort of foreboding. I

waited up for him; it was already eleven o'clock, when my wife heard of the misfortunes of this *fête* from a neighbour. I waited for two hours longer, still hoping that he would return. Then, as he did not appear, I thought it would be base and cowardly in me to sleep without having news of him."

"Then we are going towards the houses?" asked the young man.

"Yes; you said the crowd must have rushed to this side, and it certainly has done so. The unfortunate boy had doubtless been carried this way also. He is from the provinces, and is alike ignorant of the usages and the localities of this great town. Probably this was the first time he had ever been in the Place Louis XV."

"Alas! my sister is also from the provinces, monsieur."

"What a fearful sight!" said the old man, turning away from a group of corpses huddled together.

"Yet it is there we must look," replied the young man, resolutely holding his light over the heap of dead.

"Oh! I shudder to look at it, for I am a simple and unsophisticated man, and the sight of destruction causes in me an unconquerable horror."

"I had the same horror; but this evening I have served my apprenticeship to butchery and death. Hold! here is a young man of about eighteen; he has been suffocated, for I see no wounds. Is it he whom you seek?"

The old man made an effort, and held his lantern close to the body.

"No, monsieur," said he, "no; my child is younger, has black hair, and pale complexion."

"Alas! all are pale to-night," replied Philip.

"Oh! see," said the old man, "here we are, at the foot of the Garde Meuble. Look at these tokens of the struggle! This blood upon the walls, these shreds of garments upon the iron bars, these torn dresses on the points of the railing!"

"It was here — it was certainly here," murmured Philip.

"What sufferings!"

"Oh, heavens!"

"What?"

"Something white under these corpses! My sister had a white dress on. Lend me your lamp, monsieur, I beseech you."

In fact, Philip had seen and snatched a shred of white cloth. He let go his hold, having but one hand to take the lamp.

"It is a fragment of a woman's dress, held firmly in a young man's hand," cried he; "of a white dress like my sister's. Oh! Andrée! Andrée!" And the young man uttered heart-rending sobs. The old man now approached.

"It is he!" exclaimed he, opening his arms.

This exclamation attracted the young man's attention.

"Gilbert!" exclaimed Philip in his turn.

"You know Gilbert, monsieur?"

"Is it Gilbert whom you seek?"

These two questions were uttered simultaneously. The old man seized Gilbert's hand; it was as cold as death. Philip opened the young man's dress, pushed aside the shirt, and placed his hand upon his heart.

"Poor Gilbert!" said he.

"My dear child!" sobbed the old man.

"He breathes! he lives! He lives, I tell you!" exclaimed Philip.

"Oh! do you think so?"

"I am certain of it—his heart beats."

"It is true," replied the old man. "Help! help! There is a surgeon yonder."

"Oh! let us succour him ourselves, monsieur; just now I asked that man for help, and he refused me."

"He must help my child!" cried the old man, indignantly. "He *must*. Assist me, monsieur, to carry Gilbert to him."

"I have only one arm, but it is at your service, monsieur," replied Philip.

"And I, old as I am, feel strong again! Come!"

The old man seized Gilbert by the shoulders; the young man took his two feet under his right arm, and in this manner they advanced towards the group in the midst of which the surgeon was operating.

“Help! help!” cried the old man.

“The men of the people first! The men of the people first!” replied the surgeon, faithful to his maxim, and sure, each time he replied thus, of exciting a murmur of applause among the group which surrounded him.

“It is a man of the people whom I am bringing,” replied the old man, with vehemence, but beginning to share in the general admiration which the firm and resolute tone of the young operator excited.

“After the women, then,” said the surgeon; “men have more strength to support pain than women.”

“A simple bleeding will suffice, monsieur,” replied the old man.

“Oh! is it you again, my young nobleman?” said the surgeon, perceiving Philip before he saw the old man.

Philip did not reply. The old man thought that these words were addressed to him.

“I am not a nobleman,” said he, “I am a man of the people; my name is Jean Jacques Rousseau.”

The doctor gave a cry of astonishment, and making an imperative gesture:

“Give place,” said he, “to the man of nature! Make room for the emancipator of the human race! Place for the citizen of Geneva!”

“Thanks, monsieur,” said Rousseau, “thanks!”

“Has any accident happened to you?” asked the young doctor.

“Not to me, but to this poor child. See!”

“Ah! you too,” cried the physician, “you too, like myself, represent the cause of humanity.”

Rousseau, deeply moved by this unexpected triumph, could only stammer forth some almost unintelligible words. Philip, dumb with astonishment at finding himself in the

presence of the philosopher whom he admired so highly, remained standing apart. Those who stood around assisted Rousseau to lay the fainting Gilbert upon the table. It was at this moment that the old man glanced at the person whose assistance he was imploring. He was a young man about Gilbert's age, but his features presented no appearance of youth; his sallow complexion was withered like that of an old man; his heavy and drooping eyelids covered an eye like a serpent's, and his mouth was distorted as if in an epileptic fit.

His sleeves turned back to the elbow, his arms covered with blood, surrounded by lifeless and bleeding limbs, he seemed more like an executioner at work, and glorying in his task, than a physician accomplishing his sad and holy mission.

Nevertheless, Rousseau's name seemed to have had so much influence over him as to cause him to lay aside for an instant his usual brutality; he gently opened Gilbert's sleeve, tied a band of linen round his arm, and opened the vein.

The blood flowed at first drop by drop, but after some moments the pure and generous current of youth spouted forth freely.

"Ha! we shall save him," said the operator. "But he will require great care; his chest has been rudely pressed."

"I have now to thank you, monsieur," said Rousseau, "and praise you, not for the exclusive preference you show for the poor, but for your care and kindness towards them. All men are brothers."

"Even the noble, even the aristocrats, even the rich?" asked the surgeon, his piercing eye flashing from beneath his heavy eyelid.

"Even the noble, the aristocrats, the rich, when they suffer," said Rousseau.

"Monsieur," said the operator, "excuse me. I am from Baudry, near Neufchâtel; I am a Switzer like yourself, and therefore a democrat."

"A countryman?" cried Rousseau, "a native of Switzerland! Your name, monsieur, if you please?"

"An obscure name, monsieur; the name of a retiring man who devotes his life to study, waiting till he may, like yourself, devote it to the good of humanity. My name is Jean Paul Marat."

"Thanks, Monsieur Marat," said Rousseau. "But whilst enlightening the people as to their rights, do not excite them to vengeance; for if they should ever revenge themselves, you will perhaps be terrified at their reprisals."

Marat smiled a fearful smile. "Oh, if that day should happen during my life!" said he, "if I could only have the happiness to witness it!"

Rousseau heard these words, and, alarmed at the tone in which they were uttered, as a traveller trembles at the first mutterings of the far-distant thunder, he took Gilbert in his arms, and attempted to carry him away.

"Two volunteers to help Monsieur Rousseau! Two men of the people!" cried the surgeon.

"Here! here! here!" cried twenty voices, simultaneously.

Rousseau had only to choose, he pointed to the two strongest, who took the youth up in their arms.

As he was leaving the place he passed Philip.

"Here, monsieur," said he, "I have no more use for the lantern; take it."

"Thank you, monsieur," said Philip; "many thanks."

He seized the lantern, and while Rousseau once more took the way to the Rue Plastrière, he continued his search.

"Poor young man!" murmured Rousseau, turning back, and seeing Philip disappear in the blocked-up and encumbered streets. He proceeded on his way shuddering, for he still heard the shrill voice of the surgeon echoing over the field of blood, and crying:

"The men of the people! None but the men of the people! Woe to the noble, to the rich, to the aristocrats!"

CHAPTER LXVIII.

THE RETURN.

WHILE the countless catastrophes we have mentioned were rapidly succeeding each other, Monsieur de Taverney escaped all these dangers as if by a miracle.

Unable to oppose any physical resistance to the devouring force which swept away everything in its passage, but at the same time calm and collected, he had succeeded in maintaining his position in the centre of a group which was rolling onward towards the Rue de la Madeleine. This group, crushed against the parapet walls of the Place, ground against the angles of the Garde Meuble, had left a long trail of wounded and dead in its path, but, decimated as it was, it had yet succeeded in conducting the remnant of its number to a place of safety. When this was accomplished, the handful of men and women who had been left, dispersed themselves over the boulevards with cries of joy, and Monsieur de Taverney found himself, like his companions, completely out of danger.

What we are about to say would be difficult to believe, had we not already so frankly sketched the character of the baron. During the whole of this fearful passage, Monsieur de Taverney — may God forgive him! — had absolutely thought only of himself. Besides that he was not of a very affectionate disposition, he was a man of action; and, in the great crises of life, such characters always put the adage of Cæsar's, “*age quod agis*,” in practice. We shall not say, therefore, that Monsieur de Taverney was utterly selfish, we shall merely admit that

he was absent-minded. But once upon the pavement of the boulevards, once more master of his actions, sensible of having escaped from death to life, satisfied, in short, of his safety, the baron gave a deep sigh of satisfaction, followed by a cry — feeble and wailing — a cry of grief.

“My daughter!” said he, “my daughter!” and he remained motionless, his hands fell by his side, his eyes were fixed and glassy, while he searched his memory for all the particulars of their separation.

“Poor, dear man!” murmured some compassionate women.

A group had collected around the baron, ready to pity, but above all to question. But Monsieur de Taverney had no popular instincts; he felt ill at ease in the centre of this compassionate group, and making a successful effort, he broke through them, and, we say it to his praise, made a few steps towards the Place Louis XV.

But these few steps were the unreflecting movement of paternal love, which is never entirely extinguished in the heart of man. Reason immediately came to the baron’s aid and arrested his steps.

We will follow, with the reader’s permission, the course of his reasoning. First, the impossibility of returning to the Place Louis XV. occurred to him. In it there was only confusion and death, and the crowds which were still rushing from it would have rendered any attempt to pass through them as futile as for the swimmer to seek to ascend the fall of the Rhine at Schaffhausen. Besides, even if a Divine arm enabled him to reach the Place, how could he hope to find one woman among a hundred thousand women? And why should he expose himself again, and fruitlessly, to a death from which he had so miraculously escaped?

Then came hope, — that light which ever gilds the clouds of the darkest night. Was not Andrée near Philip, resting on his arm, protected by his manly strength and his brother’s heart?

That he, the baron, a feeble and tottering old man, should have been carried away, was very natural; but that Philip, with his ardent, vigorous, hopeful nature — Philip, with his arm of iron — Philip, responsible for his sister's safety — should be so, was impossible. Philip had struggled and must have conquered.

The baron, like all selfish men, endowed Philip with those qualities which his selfishness denied to himself, but which nevertheless he sought in others, — strength, generosity, and valour. For one selfish man regards all other selfish men as rivals and enemies, who rob him of those advantages which he believes he has the right of reaping from society.

Monsieur de Taverney, being thus reassured by the force of his own arguments, concluded that Philip had naturally saved his sister; that he had perhaps lost some time in seeking his father to save him also, but that probably, nay, certainly, he had taken the way to the Rue Coq-Heron, to conduct Andrée, who must be a little alarmed by all the scene, home.

He therefore wheeled round, and descending the Rue des Capucines, he gained the Place des Conquêtes, or Louis le Grand, now called the Place des Victoires.

But scarcely had the baron arrived within twenty paces of the hotel, when Nicole, placed as sentinel on the threshold, where she was chattering with some companions, exclaimed: "And Monsieur Philip? and Mademoiselle Andrée? What has become of them?" For all Paris was already informed by the earliest fugitives of the catastrophe, which their terror had even exaggerated.

"Oh, heavens!" cried the baron, a little agitated, "have they not returned, Nicole?"

"No, no, monsieur, they have not been seen."

"They most probably have been obliged to make a detour," replied the baron, trembling more and more in proportion as the calculations of his logic were demolished; and he remained standing in the street waiting in his turn

along with Nicole, who was sobbing, and La Brie, who raised his clasped hands to heaven.

“Ah! here is Monsieur Philip!” exclaimed Nicole, in a one of indescribable terror, for Philip was alone.

And in the darkness of the night, Philip was seen running towards them, breathless and despairing.

“Is my sister here?” cried he, while yet at a distance, as soon as he could see the group assembled at the door of the hotel.

“Oh, my God!” exclaimed the baron, pale and trembling.

“Andrée! Andrée!” cried the young man, approaching nearer and nearer; “where is Andrée?”

“We have not seen her; she is not here, Monsieur Philip. Oh, heavens! my dear young lady!” cried Nicole, bursting into tears.

“And yet you have returned?” said the baron, in a tone of anger, which must seem to the reader the more unjust, that we have already made him acquainted with the secrets of his logic.

Philip, instead of replying, approached and showed his bleeding face, and his arm, broken and hanging at his side like a withered branch.

“Alas! alas!” sighed the old man, “Andrée! my poor Andrée!” and he sunk back upon the stone bench beside the door.

“I will find her, living or dead!” exclaimed Philip, gloomily; and he again started off with feverish activity. Without slackening his pace, he secured his left arm in the opening of his vest, for this useless limb would have fettered his movements in the crowd; and if he had had a hatchet at that moment, he would have struck it off. It was then that he met on that fatal field of the dead, Rousseau, Gilbert, and the fierce and gloomy operator who, covered with blood, seemed rather an infernal demon presiding over the massacre, than a beneficent genius appearing to succour and to help. During a great portion of the night Philip wandered over the Place Louis XV.,

unable to tear himself away from the walls of the *Garde Meuble*, near which Gilbert had been found, and incessantly gazing at the piece of white muslin which the young man had held firmly grasped in his hand.

But when the first light of day appeared, worn out, ready to sink among the heaps of corpses scarcely paler than himself, seized with a strange giddiness, and hoping, as his father had hoped, that Andrée might have returned or been carried back to the house, Philip bent his steps once more towards the Rue Coq-Heron. While still at a distance he saw the same group he had left there, and guessing at once that Andrée had not returned, he stopped. The baron, on his side, had recognised his son.

“Well?” cried he.

“What! has my sister not returned?” asked the young man.

“Alas!” cried, with one voice, the baron, Nicole, and La Brie.

“Nothing?—no news, no information, no hope?”

“Nothing!”

Philip fell upon the stone bench of the hotel; the baron uttered a savage exclamation.

At this very moment a hackney-coach appeared at the end of the street; it approached slowly and stopped in front of the hotel. A woman’s head was seen through the door, resting on her shoulders, as if she had fainted. Philip, roused by this sight, hastened towards the vehicle. The door of the coach opened, and a man alighted, bearing the senseless form of Andrée in his arms.

“Dead! dead!—They bring us her corpse!” cried Philip, falling on his knees.

“Dead!” stammered the baron, “oh, monsieur, is she indeed dead?”

“I think not, gentlemen,” calmly replied the man who carried Andrée; “Mademoiselle de Taverney, I hope, is only in a swoon.”

“Oh! the sorcerer, the sorcerer!” cried the baron.

"The Count de Balsamo!" murmured Philip.

"The same, monsieur; and truly happy in having recognised Mademoiselle de Taverney in this frightful *mélée*."

"In what part of it, monsieur?" asked Philip.

"Near the Garde Meuble."

"Yes," said Philip. Then, his expression of joy changing suddenly to one of gloomy distrust, —

"You bring her back very late, count," said he.

"Monsieur," replied Balsamo, without seeming in the least surprised, "you may easily comprehend my embarrassing situation. I did not know your sister's address, and I had no resource but to take her to the Marchioness de Sévigny's, a friend of mine, who lives near the royal stables. Then this honest fellow whom you see, and who assisted me to rescue the young lady — come hither, Courtois!" Balsamo accompanied these last words by a sign, and a man in the royal livery appeared from the coach. "Then," continued Balsamo, "this worthy fellow, who belongs to the royal stables, recognised the young lady as having one evening driven her from Muette to your hotel. Mademoiselle Taverney owes this lucky recognition to her marvellous beauty. I made him accompany me in the coach, and I have the honour to restore Mademoiselle de Taverney to you with all the respect due to her, and less injured than you think." And as he concluded he gave the young girl into the care of her father and Nicole.

For the first time the baron felt a tear trembling on his eyelids, and though, no doubt, inwardly surprised at this mark of feeling, he permitted it to roll unheeded down his wrinkled cheeks. Philip held out the only hand he had at liberty to Balsamo.

"Monsieur," he said, "you know my name and my address. Give me an opportunity of showing my gratitude for the service you have rendered us."

"I have only fulfilled a duty," replied Balsamo. "Do I not owe you hospitality?" And bowing low, he made a

few steps to retire, without replying to the baron's invitation to enter. But returning, —

"Excuse me," said he, "but I omitted to give you the exact address of the Marchioness de Sévigny. She lives in the Rue St. Honoré, near the Feuillants. I thought it necessary to give you this information, in case Mademoiselle de Taverney should think proper to call on her."

There was in this precision of details, in this accumulation of proofs, a delicacy which touched Philip deeply, and affected even the baron.

"Monsieur," said the baron, "my daughter owes her life to you."

"I know it, monsieur, and I feel proud and happy at the thought," replied Balsamo.

And this time, followed by Courtois, who refused Philip's proffered purse, he entered the fiacre, which drove off rapidly.

Almost at the same moment, and as if Balsamo's departure had put an end to her swoon, Andrée opened her eyes, but she remained for some moments mute, bewildered, and with a wild and staring look.

"Oh, heavens!" murmured Philip; "has Providence only half restored her to us? Has her reason fled?"

Andrée seemed to comprehend these words, and shook her head; but she remained silent, and as if under the influence of a sort of ecstasy. She was still standing, and one of her arms was extended in the direction of the street by which Balsamo had disappeared.

"Come, come," said the baron; "it is time to put an end to all this. Assist your sister into the house, Philip."

The young man supported Andrée with his uninjured arm, Nicole sustained her on the other side; and, walking on, but after the manner of a sleeping person, she entered the hotel and gained her apartments. There, for the first time, the power of speech returned.

"Philip! My father!" said she.

"She recognises us! she knows us again!" exclaimed Philip.

"Of course, I know you again; but oh, heavens! what has happened?"

And Andrée closed her eyes, but this time not in a swoon, but in a calm and peaceful slumber.

Nicole, left alone with her young mistress, undressed her and put her in bed.

When Philip returned to his apartments, he found there a physician whom the thoughtful La Brie had run to summon, as soon as the anxiety on Andrée's account had subsided.

The doctor examined Philip's arm. It was not broken, but only dislocated, and a skilful compression replaced the shoulder in the socket from which it had been removed. After the operation, Philip, who was still uneasy on his sister's account, conducted the doctor to her bedside.

The doctor felt her pulse, listened to her breathing, and smiled.

"Your sister sleeps as calmly as an infant," said he. "Let her sleep, chevalier; there is nothing else necessary to be done."

As for the baron, sufficiently reassured on his children's account, he had long been sound asleep.

CHAPTER LXIX.

M. DE JUSSIEU.

We must again transport the reader to the house in the Rue Plastrière, where Monsieur de Sartines had sent his agent, and there, on the morning of the 31st of May, we shall once more find Gilbert stretched upon a mattress in Thérèse's room, and, standing around him, Thérèse and Rousseau, with several of their neighbours, contemplating this specimen of the dreadful event at the remembrance of which all Paris still shuddered.

Gilbert, pale and bleeding, opened his eyes; and as soon as he regained his consciousness, he endeavoured to raise himself and look round as if he were still in the Place Louis XV. An expression of profound anxiety, followed by one of triumphant joy, was pictured in his features; then a second cloud flitted across his countenance, which resumed its sombre hue.

"Are you suffering, my dear child?" inquired Rousseau, taking his hand affectionately.

"Oh! who has saved me?" asked Gilbert. "Who thought of me, lonely and friendless being that I am?"

"What saved you, my child, was the happy chance that you were not yet dead. He who thought of you was the same Almighty Being who thinks of all."

"No matter; it is very imprudent," grumbled Thérèse, "to go among such a crowd."

"Yes, yes, it is very imprudent," repeated all the neighbours with one voice.

"Why, ladies," interrupted Rousseau, "there is no imprudence when there is no manifest danger, and there is

no manifest danger in going to see fireworks. When danger arrives under such circumstances, you do not call the sufferer imprudent, but unfortunate. Any of us present would have done the same."

Gilbert looked round, and seeing himself in Rousseau's apartment, endeavoured to speak ; but the effort was too much for him, the blood gushed from his mouth and nostrils, and he sank back insensible. Rousseau had been warned by the surgeon of the Place Louis XV., and was therefore not alarmed. In expectation of a similar event, he had placed the invalid on a temporary mattress without sheets.

"In the mean time," said he to Thérèse, "you may put the poor lad to bed."

"Where ?"

"Why here, in my bed."

Gilbert heard these words. Extreme weakness alone prevented his replying immediately, but he made a violent effort, and, opening his eyes, said, slowly and painfully, "No, no ; upstairs."

"You wish to return to your own room ?"

"Yes, yes, if you please ;" and he completed with his eyes, rather than with his tongue, this wish, dictated by a recollection still more powerful than pain, and which with him seemed to survive even his consciousness.

Rousseau, whose own sensibility was so extreme, doubtless understood him, for he added,—

"It is well, my child ; we will carry you up. He does not wish to inconvenience us," said he to Thérèse, who had warmly applauded the resolution. It was therefore decided that Gilbert should be instantly installed in the attic he preferred.

Towards the middle of the day, Rousseau came to pass the hours he usually spent in collecting his favourite plants by the bedside of his disciple ; and the young man, feeling a little better, related to him, in a low and almost inaudible voice, the details of the catastrophe. But he did not mention the real cause why he went to see the fireworks.

Curiosity alone, he said, led him to the Place Louis XV. Rousseau could not suspect anything farther, unless he had been a sorcerer, and he therefore expressed no surprise at Gilbert's story, but contented himself with the questions he had already put, and only recommended patience. He did not speak either of the fragment of muslin which had been found in Gilbert's hand, and of which Philip had taken possession.

Nevertheless, this conversation, which, on both sides, bordered so narrowly on the real feelings of each, was no less attractive on that account; and they were still deeply absorbed in it, when, all at once, Thérèse's step was heard upon the landing.

“Jacques !” said she, “Jacques !”

“Well, what is it ?”

“Some prince coming to visit me, in my turn,” said Gilbert, with a feeble smile.

“Jacques !” cried Thérèse, advancing and still calling.

“Well ! What do you want with me ?”

Thérèse entered.

“Monsieur de Jussieu is below,” said she; “he heard that you were in the crowd during that night, and he has come to see if you have been hurt.”

“The good Jussieu !” said Rousseau. “Excellent man, like all those who, from taste or from necessity, commune with nature, the source of all good. Be calm, do not move, Gilbert; I will return.”

“Yes, thank you,” said the young man.

Rousseau left the room.

But scarcely was he gone when Gilbert, raising himself as well as he could, dragged himself towards the skylight from which Andrée's window could be seen.

It was a most painful effort for a young man without strength, almost without the power of thought, to raise himself upon the stool, lift the sash of the skylight, and prop himself upon the edge of the roof. Gilbert, nevertheless, succeeded in effecting this, but once there, his eyes

swam, his hand shook, the blood rushed to his lips, and he fell heavily upon the floor.

At that moment the door of the garret was opened, and Rousseau entered, followed by Jussieu, to whom he was paying great civility.

"Take care, my dear philosopher; stoop a little here," said Rousseau. "There is a step there,—we are not entering a palace."

"Thank you; I have good eyes and stout limbs," replied the learned botanist.

"Here is some one come to visit you, my little Gilbert," said Rousseau, looking towards the bed. "Oh! good heavens! where is he? He has got up, the unfortunate lad!"

And Rousseau, seeing the window open, commenced to vent his displeasure in affectionate grumblings. Gilbert raised himself with difficulty, and said, in an almost inaudible voice, "I wanted air."

It was impossible to scold him, for suffering was plainly depicted in his pale and altered features.

"In fact," interrupted Monsieur de Jussieu, "it is dreadfully warm here. Come, young man, let me feel your pulse; I am also a doctor."

"And better than many regular physicians," said Rousseau, "for you are a healer of the mind as well as of the body."

"It is too much honour—" murmured Gilbert feebly, endeavouring to shroud himself from view in his humble pallet.

"Monsieur de Jussieu insisted on visiting you," said Rousseau, "and I accepted his offer. Well, dear doctor, what do you think of his chest?"

The skilful anatomist felt the bones, and sounded the cavity by an attentive auscultation.

"The vital parts are uninjured," said he. "But who has pressed you in his arms with so much force?"

"Alas! monsieur, it was death!" said Gilbert.

Rousseau looked at the young man with astonishment.

"Oh! you are bruised, my child, greatly bruised; but tonics, air, leisure will make all that disappear."

"No leisure; I cannot afford it," said the young man, looking at Rousseau.

"What does he mean?" asked Jussieu.

"Gilbert is a determined worker, my dear monsieur," replied Rousseau.

"Agreed; but he cannot possibly work for a day or two yet."

"To obtain a livelihood," said Gilbert, "one must work every day; for every day one eats."

"Oh! you will not consume much food for a short time, and your medicine will not cost much."

"However little they cost, monsieur," said Gilbert, "I never receive alms."

"You are mad," said Rousseau, "and you exaggerate. I tell you that you must be governed by Monsieur de Jussieu's orders, who will be your doctor in spite of yourself. Would you believe it," continued he, addressing Monsieur de Jussieu, "he has begged me not to send for one?"

"Why not?"

"Because it would have cost me money, and he is proud."

"But," replied Monsieur de Jussieu, gazing at Gilbert's fine expressive features with growing interest, "no matter how proud he is, he cannot accomplish impossibilities. Do you think yourself capable of working, when you fell down with the mere exertion of going to the window?"

"It is true," sighed Gilbert, "I am weak; I know it."

"Well, then, take repose, and, above all, mentally. You are the guest of a man whom all men obey, except his guest."

Rousseau, delighted at this delicate compliment from so great a man, took his hand and pressed it.

"And then," continued Monsieur de Jussieu, "you will

become an object of particular care to the king and the princes."

"I!" exclaimed Gilbert

"You, a poor victim of that unfortunate evening The dauphin, when he heard the news, uttered cries of grief; and the dauphiness, who was going to Marly, remained at Trianon to be more within reach of the unfortunate sufferers."

"Oh, indeed!" said Rousseau.

"Yes, my dear philosopher, and nothing is spoken of but the letter written by the dauphin to Monsieur de Sartines "

"I have not heard of it "

"It is at once simple and touching The dauphin receives a monthly pension of two thousand crowns. This morning his month's income had not been paid. The prince walked to and fro quite alarmed, asked for the treasurer several times, and as soon as the latter brought him the money, sent it instantly to Paris with two charming lines to Monsieur de Sartines, who has just shown them to me "

"Ah, then you have seen Monsieur de Sartines to-day?" said Rousseau, with a kind of uneasiness, or rather distrust

"Yes, I have just left him," replied Monsieur de Jussieu, rather embarrassed "I had to ask him for some seeds. So that," added he, quickly, "the dauphiness remained at Versailles to tend her sick and wounded."

"Her sick and wounded?" asked Rousseau

"Yes, Monsieur Gilbert is not the only one who has suffered. This time the lower classes have only paid a partial quota to the accident, it is said that there are many noble persons among the wounded "

Gilbert listened with inexpressible eagerness and anxiety. It seemed to him that every moment the name of Andree would be pronounced by the illustrious naturalist. But Monsieur de Jussieu rose.

"So our consultation is over?" said Rousseau.

"And henceforward our science will be useless with regard to this young invalid; air, moderate exercise, the woods—ah! by-the-bye, I was forgetting—"

"What?"

"Next Sunday I am to make a botanical excursion to the forest of Marly; will you accompany me, my illustrious fellow-labourer?"

"Oh!" replied Rousseau, "say rather your unworthy admirer."

"*Parbleu!* that will be a fine opportunity for giving our invalid a walk. Bring him."

"So far?"

"The distance is nothing; besides, my carriage takes me as far as Bougival, and I can give you a seat. We will go by the Princess's Road to Luciennes, and from thence proceed to Marly. Botanists stop every moment; our invalid will carry our camp-stools; you and I will gather samples; he will gather health."

"What an amiable man you are, my dear Jussieu!" said Rousseau.

"Never mind; it is for my own interest. You have, I know, a great work ready upon mosses, and as I am feeling my way a little on the same subject you will guide me."

"Oh!" exclaimed Rousseau, whose satisfaction was apparent in spite of himself.

"And when there," added the botanist, "we shall have a little breakfast in the open air, and shall enjoy the shade and the beautiful flowers. It is settled?"

"Oh, certainly."

"For Sunday, then?"

"Delightful. It seems to me as if I were fifteen again. I revel beforehand in all the pleasure I have in prospect," replied Rousseau, with almost childish satisfaction.

"And you, my young friend, must get stronger on your legs in the meantime."

Gilbert stammered out some words of thanks, which Monsieur Jussieu did not hear, and the two botanists left Gilbert alone with his thoughts, and above all with his fears.

CHAPTER LXX.

LIFE RETURNS.

IN the meantime, whilst Rousseau believed his invalid to be on the high-road to health, and whilst Thérèse informed all her neighbours that—thanks to the prescriptions of the learned doctor, Monsieur de Jussieu—Gilbert was entirely out of danger, during this period of general confidence the young man incurred the worst danger he had yet run, by his obstinacy and his perpetual reveries. Rousseau could not be so confident but that he entertained in his inmost thoughts a distrust solidly founded on philosophical reasonings.

Knowing Gilbert to be in love, and having caught him in open rebellion to medical authority, he judged that he would again commit the same faults if he gave him too much liberty. Therefore, like a good father, he had closed the padlock of Gilbert's attic more carefully than ever, tacitly permitting him meanwhile to go to the window, but carefully preventing his crossing the threshold. It may easily be imagined what rage this solicitude, which changed his garret into a prison, aroused in Gilbert's breast, and what hosts of projects crowded his teeming brain. To many minds constraint is fruitful in inventions. Gilbert now thought only of Andrée, of the happiness of seeing and watching over the progress of her convalescence, even from afar; but Andrée did not appear at the windows of the pavilion, and Gilbert, when he fixed his ardent and searching looks on the opposite apartments, or surveyed every nook and corner of the building, could only see Nicole carrying the invalid's draught on a porcelain plate, or Monsieur de Taverney surveying the

garden, and vigorously taking snuff, as if to clear and refresh his intellect. Still these details tranquillised him, for they betokened illness, but not death.

“There,” thought he, “beyond that door, behind that blind, breathes, sighs, and suffers she whom I adore, whom I idolise,—she whose very sight would cause the perspiration to stand upon my forehead and make my limbs tremble,—she to whose existence mine is forever riveted,—she for whom alone I breathe and live!”

And then, leaning forward out of his window,—so that the inquisitive Chon thought, twenty times in an hour, that he would throw himself out,—Gilbert, with his practised eye, took the measure of the partitions, of the floors, of the depth of the pavilion, and constructed an exact plan of them in his brain. There Monsieur de Taverney slept; there must be the kitchen; there Philip’s apartments; there the cabinet occupied by Nicole; and, last of all, there must be Andrée’s chamber,—the sanctuary at the door of which he would have given his life to remain for one day kneeling.

This sanctuary, according to Gilbert’s plan, was a large apartment on the ground-floor, guarded by an ante-chamber, from which opened a small cabinet with a glass door, which, agreeably to Gilbert’s arrangement, served as Nicole’s sleeping-chamber.

“Oh!” exclaimed the excited youth, in his fits of jealous fury, “how happy are the beings who are privileged to walk in the garden on which my window and those of the staircase look! How happy those thoughtless mortals who tread the gravel of the parterre! For there, during the silence of night, may be heard Mademoiselle Andrée’s plaints and sighs.”

Between the formation of a wish and its accomplishment there is a wide gulf; but fertile imaginations can throw a bridge across. They can find the real in the impossible; they know how to cross the broadest rivers and scale the highest mountains, by a plan peculiarly their own.

For the first few days Gilbert contented himself with wishing. Then he reflected that these much envied, happy beings were simple mortals, endowed, as he was, with limbs to tread the soil of the garden, and with arms to open the doors. Then, by degrees, he pictured to himself the happiness there would be in secretly gliding into this forbidden house,—in pressing his ears against the Venetian blinds, through which the sounds from the interior were, as it were, filtered. With Gilbert, wishing did not long suffice, the fulfilment must be immediate.

Besides, his strength returned rapidly, youth is fruitful and rich. At the end of three days, his veins still throb-bing with feverish excitement, Gilbert felt himself as strong as he had ever been in his life.

He calculated that, as Rousseau had locked him in, one of the greatest difficulties—that of obtaining an entrance into the hotel of the Taverneys by the street-door—was placed out of the question, for, as the entrance-door opened upon the Rue Coq-Heron, and as Gilbert was locked up in the Rue Plastrière, he could not of course reach any street, and had therefore no need to open any doors. There remained the windows. That of his garret looked down upon a perpendicular wall of forty-eight feet in depth.

No one, unless he were drunk or mad, would venture to descend it. "Oh! those doors are happy inventions after all," thought he, clenching his hands; "and yet Monsieur Rousseau, a philosopher, locks them!"

To break the padlock! That would be easily done, but if so, adieu to the hospitable roof which had sheltered him

To escape from Luciennes, from the Rue Plastrière, from Taverney,—always to escape, would be to render himself unable to look a single creature in the face without fearing to meet the reproach of ingratitude.

"No!" thought he, "Monsieur Rousseau shall know nothing of it."

Leaning out of his window, Gilbert continued:—

"With my hands and my legs, those instruments granted

to free men by nature, I will creep along the tiles, and, keeping in the spout,—which is narrow, indeed, but straight, and therefore the direct road from one end to the other,—I shall arrive, if I get on so far, at the skylight parallel to this. Now, this skylight belongs to the stairs. If I do not reach so far, I shall fall into the garden; that will make a noise, people will hasten from the pavilion, will raise me up, will recognise me, and I die nobly, poetically, pitied! That would be glorious!

“If I arrive, as everything leads me to believe I shall, I will creep in under the skylight over the stairs, and descend barefooted to the first story, the window of which also opens in the garden, at fifteen feet from the ground. I jump. Alas! my strength, my activity are gone! It is true that there is an espalier to assist me. Yes, but this espalier with its rotten framework will break; I shall tumble down, not killed nobly and poetically, but whitened with plaster, my clothes torn, ashamed, and looking as if I had come to rob the orchard! Odious thought! Monsieur de Taverney will order the porter to flog me, or La Brie to pull my ears.

“No! I have here twenty packthreads, which, twisted together, will make a rope, according to Monsieur Rousseau’s definition that many straws make a sheaf. I shall borrow all these packthreads from Madame Thérèse for one night; I shall knot them together, and when I have reached the window on the first floor, I shall tie the rope to the little balcony, or even to the lead, and slip down into the garden.”

When Gilbert had inspected the spout, attached and measured the cords, and calculated the height by his eye, he felt himself strong and determined.

He twisted the pieces of twine together and made a tolerably strong rope of them, then tried its strength by hanging to a beam in his garret; and, happy to find that he had only spat blood once during his efforts, he decided upon the nocturnal expedition.

The better to hoodwink Monsieur Jacques and Thérèse, he counterfeited illness, and kept his bed until two o'clock, at which time Rousseau went out for his after-dinner walk and did not return usually till the evening. When Rousseau paid a visit to his attic, before setting out, Gilbert announced to him his wish of sleeping until the next morning; to which Rousseau replied, that as he had made an engagement to sup from home that evening, he was happy to find Gilbert inclined to rest.

With these mutual explanations they separated. When Rousseau was gone, Gilbert brought out his packthreads again, and this time he twisted them permanently.

He again examined the spout and the tiles; then placed himself at the window to keep watch on the garden until evening.

CHAPTER LXXI.

THE AERIAL TRIP.

GILBERT was now prepared for his entrance into the enemy's camp, for thus he mentally termed Monsieur de Taverney's grounds, and from his window he explored the garden with the care and attention of a skilful strategist who is about to give battle, when, in this calm and motionless mansion, an incident occurred which attracted the philosopher's attention.

A stone flew over the garden wall and struck against the angle of the house. Gilbert, who had already learned that there can be no effect without a cause, determined to discover the cause, having seen the effect.

But although he leaned out as far as possible, he could not discover the person in the street who had thrown the stone. However, he immediately comprehended that this manœuvre had reference to an event which just then took place; one of the outside shutters of the ground-floor opened cautiously, and through the opening appeared Nicole's head.

On seeing Nicole, Gilbert made a plunge back in his garret, but without losing sight of the nimble young girl. The latter, after throwing a stealthy glance at all the windows, particularly at those of the pavilion, emerged from her hiding-place and ran towards the garden, as if going to the espalier, where some lace was drying in the sun. It was on the path which led towards the espalier that the stone had fallen, and neither Nicole nor Gilbert lost sight of it. Gilbert saw her kick this stone, which

for the moment became of such great importance, before her several times, and she continued this manœuvre until she reached the flower border, in which the espalier stood. Once there, Nicole raised her hands to take down the lace, let fall some of it, and, in picking it up again, seized the stone.

As yet Gilbert could understand nothing of this movement, but seeing Nicole pick up the stone as a greedy school-boy picks up a nut, and unroll a slip of paper which was tied round it, he at once guessed the degree of importance which was attached to this aerolite.

It was, in fact, neither more nor less than a note which Nicole had found rolled round the stone. The cunning girl quickly unfolded it, read it, and put it into her pocket, and then immediately discovered that there was no more occasion for looking at the lace, it was dry.

Meanwhile Gilbert shook his head, saying to himself, with the blind selfishness of men who entertain a bad opinion of women, that Nicole was in reality a viciously inclined person, and that he, Gilbert, had performed an act of sound and moral policy in breaking off so suddenly and so boldly with a girl who had letters thrown to her over the wall.

Nicole ran back to the house, and soon reappeared, this time holding her hand in her pocket. She drew from it a key, which Gilbert saw glitter in her hand for a moment, and then the young girl slipped this key under a little door which served to admit the gardener, and which was situated at the extremity of the wall opposite the street, and parallel to the great door which was generally used.

“Good!” said Gilbert, “I understand—a love-letter and a rendezvous. Nicole loses no time; she has already a new lover.”

And he frowned with the disappointment of a man who thinks that his loss should cause an irreparable void in the heart of the woman he abandons, and who finds this void completely filled.

"This may spoil all my projects," he continued, seeking a factitious cause for his ill-humour. "No matter," resumed he, after a moment's silence, "I shall not be sorry to know the happy mortal who succeeds me in Mademoiselle Nicole's good graces."

But Gilbert, on certain subjects, had a very discerning judgment. He calculated that the discovery which he had made, and which Nicole was far from suspecting, would give him an advantage over her which might be of use to him, since he knew her secret, with such details as she could not deny, while she scarcely suspected his, and, even if she did, there existed no facts which could give a colour to her suspicions. During all these goings and comings, the anxiously expected night had come on.

The only thing which Gilbert now feared was the return of Rousseau, who might surprise him on the roof or on the staircase, or might come up and find his room empty. In the latter case, the anger of the philosopher of Geneva would be terrible, but Gilbert hoped to avert the blow by means of the following note, which he left upon his little table, addressed to the philosopher:—

"**MY DEAR AND ILLUSTRIOUS PROTECTOR,**— Do not think ill of me if, notwithstanding your recomenndations, and even against your order, I have dared to leave my apartment. I shall soon return, unless some accident, similar to that which has already happened to me, should again take place; but at the risk of a similar, or even a worse accident, I must leave my room for two hours."

"I do not know what I shall say when I return," thought Gilbert; "but at least Monsieur Rousseau will not be uneasy or angry."

The evening was dark. A suffocating heat prevailed, as it often does during the first warmths of spring. The sky was cloudy, and at half-past eight the most practised eye could have distinguished nothing at the bottom of the dark gulf into which Gilbert peered.

It was then, for the first time, that the young man perceived that he breathed with difficulty, and that sudden perspirations bedewed his forehead and breast, — unmistakable signs of a weak and unhinged system. Prudence counselled him not to undertake, in his present condition, an expedition for which strength and steadiness in all his members were peculiarly necessary, not only to ensure success, but even for the preservation of his life; but Gilbert did not listen to what his physical instincts counselled.

His moral will spoke more loudly; and to it, as ever, the young man vowed obedience.

The moment had come. Gilbert rolled his rope several times round his neck, and commenced, with beating heart, to scale the skylight; then, firmly grasping the casement, he made the first step in the spout towards the skylight on the right, which was, as we have said, that of the staircase, and about two fathoms distance from his own.

His feet in a groove of lead, at the utmost eight inches wide, which groove, though it was supported here and there by holdfasts of iron, yet, from the pliability of the lead, yielded to his steps; his hands resting against the tiles, which could only be a point of support for his equilibrium, but no help in case of falling, since the fingers could take no hold of them; this was Gilbert's position during this aerial passage, which lasted two minutes, but which seemed to Gilbert to occupy two centuries.

But Gilbert determined not to be afraid; and such was the power of will in this young man that he succeeded. He recollects to have heard a rope-dancer say, that to walk safely on narrow ways one ought never to look downwards, but about ten feet in advance, and never think of the abyss beneath, but as an eagle might, — that is, with the conviction of being able to float over it at pleasure. Besides, Gilbert had already put these precepts in practice in several visits he had paid to Nicole — that Nicole who was now so bold that she made use of keys and doors instead of roofs and chimneys.

In this manner he had often passed the sluices of the mill at Taverney, and the naked beams of the roof of an old barn. He arrived, therefore, at the goal without a shudder, and once arrived there, he glided beneath the skylight, and with a thrill of joy alighted on the staircase. But on reaching the landing-place he stopped short. Voices were heard on the lower stories; they were those of Thérèse and certain neighbours of hers, who were speaking of Rousseau's genius, of the merit of his books, and of the harmony of his music.

The neighbours had read "La Nouvelle Héloïse," and confessed frankly that they found the book improper. In reply to this criticism Madame Thérèse observed that they did not understand the philosophical part of this delightful book. To this the neighbours had nothing to reply, except to confess their incompetence to give an opinion on such a subject.

This edifying conversation was held from one landing-place to another; and the fire of discussion, ardent as it was, was less so than that of the stoves on which the savoury suppers of these ladies were cooking. Gilbert was listening to the arguments, therefore, and snuffing the smell of the viands, when his name, pronounced in the midst of the tumult, caused him to start rather unpleasantly.

"After my supper," said Thérèse, "I must go and see if that dear child does not want something in his attic."

This *dear child* gave Gilbert less pleasure than the promise of the visit gave him alarm. Luckily, he remembered that Thérèse, when she supped alone, chatted a long time with her bottle, that the meat seemed savoury, and that after supper meant—ten o'clock. It was now only a quarter to nine. Besides, it was probable that, after supper, the course of ideas in Thérèse's brain would take a change, and that she would then think of anything else rather than of the *dear child*.

But time was slipping past, to the great vexation of

Gilbert, when all at once one of the joints of the allied dames began to burn.

The cry of the alarmed cook was heard, which put an end to all conversation, for every one hurried to the theatre of the catastrophe. Gilbert profited by this culinary panic among the ladies to glide down the stairs like a shadow.

Arrived at the first story, he found the leading of the window well adapted to hold his rope, and, attaching it by a slip-knot, he mounted the window-sill and began rapidly to descend.

He was still suspended between the window and the ground, when a rapid step sounded in the garden beneath him. He had sufficient time, before the step reached him, to return, and holding fast by the knots, he watched to see who this untimely visitor was.

It was a man, and as he proceeded from the direction of the little door, Gilbert did not doubt for an instant but that it was the happy mortal whom Nicole was expecting.

He fixed all his attention, therefore, upon this second intruder, who had thus arrested him in the midst of his perilous descent. By his walk, by a glance at his profile, seen from beneath his three-cornered hat, and by the particular mode in which this hat was placed over the corner of his attentive ear, Gilbert fancied he recognised the famous Beausire, that exempt whose acquaintance Nicole had made in Taverney.

Almost immediately he saw Nicole open the door of the pavilion, hasten into the garden, leaving the door open, and light and active as a bird, direct her steps towards the greenhouse,—that is to say, in the direction in which Monsieur Beausire was already advancing.

This was most certainly not the first rendezvous which had taken place, since neither one nor other betrayed the least hesitation as to their place of meeting.

“Now I can finish my descent,” thought Gilbert; “for if Nicole has appointed this hour for meeting her lover, it must be because she is certain of being undisturbed. Andrée must be alone then,—oh, heavens! alone.”

In fact, no noise was heard in the house, and only a faint light gleamed from the windows of the ground-floor. Gilbert alighted upon the ground without any accident, and, unwilling to cross the garden, he glided gently along the wall till he came to a clump of trees, crossed it in a stooping posture, and arrived at the door which Nicole had left open without having been discovered. There, sheltered by an immense aristolochia, which was trained over the door, and hung down in large festoons, he observed that the outer apartment, which was a spacious ante-chamber, was, as he had guessed, perfectly empty. This ante-chamber communicated with the interior of the house by means of two doors, one open, the other closed; Gilbert guessed that the open one was that belonging to Nicole's chamber. He softly entered this room, stretching out his hands before him for fear of accident, for the room was entirely without light; but, at the end of a sort of corridor was seen a glass door whose framework was clearly designed against the light of the adjoining apartment. On the inner side of this glass door was drawn a muslin curtain.

As Gilbert advanced along the corridor, he heard a feeble voice speaking in the lighted apartment; it was Andrée's, and every drop of Gilbert's blood rushed to his heart. Another voice replied to hers; it was Philip's. The young man was anxiously inquiring after his sister's health.

Gilbert, now on his guard, proceeded a few steps farther, and placed himself behind one of those truncated columns surmounted by a bust, which, at that period, formed the usual ornament of double doors. Thus concealed, he strained his eyes and ears to the utmost stretch; so happy, that his heart melted with joy; so fearful, that the same heart shrunk together till it seemed to become only a minute point in his breast.

He listened and gazed.

CHAPTER LXXII.

THE BROTHER AND SISTER.

GILBERT, as we have said, gazed and listened. He saw Andrée stretched on a reclining chair, her face turned towards the glass door, that is to say, directly towards him. This door was slightly ajar.

A small lamp with a deep shade was placed upon an adjoining table—which was covered with books, indicating the only species of recreation permitted to the invalid—and lighted only the lower part of Mademoiselle de Taverney's face. Sometimes, however, when she leaned back, so as to rest against the pillow of the reclining chair, the light overspread her marble forehead, which was veiled in a lace cap. Philip was sitting at the foot of her chair with his back towards Gilbert; his arm was still in a sling, and all exercise of it was forbidden.

It was the first time that Andrée had been up, and the first time also that Philip had left his room. The young people, therefore, had not seen each other since that terrible night, but each knew that the other was recovering, and hastening towards convalescence. They had only been together for a few moments, and were conversing without restraint, for they knew that even if any one should interrupt them, they would be warned by the noise of the bell attached to the door which Nicole had left open. But of course they were not aware of the circumstance of the door having been left open, and they calculated upon the bell.

Gilbert saw and heard all, therefore; for, through this open door, he could seize every word of their conversation.

"So now," Philip was saying, just as Gilbert took his place behind a curtain hung loosely before the door of a dressing-room, "so now you breathe more easily, my poor sister?"

"Yes, more easily; but still with a slight pain."

"And your strength?"

"Returns but slowly; nevertheless, I have been able to walk to the window two or three times to-day. How sweet the fresh air is, how lovely the flowers! It seems to me that, surrounded with air and flowers, it is impossible to die."

"But still you are very weak; are you not, Andrée?"

"Oh, yes; for the shock was a terrible one! Therefore," continued the young girl, smiling, and shaking her head, "I repeat that I walk with difficulty, and am obliged to lean on the tables and the projecting points of the wainscoting. Without this support my limbs bend under me, and I feel as if I should every moment fall."

"Courage, Andrée! The fresh air and the beautiful flowers you spoke of just now will cure you, and in a week you will be able to pay a visit to the dauphiness, who, I am informed, sends to inquire so kindly for you."

"Yes, I hope so, Philip; for the dauphiness in truth seems most kind to me."

And Andrée, leaning back, put her hand upon her chest and closed her lovely eyes.

Gilbert made a step forward with outstretched arms.

"You are in pain, my sister?" asked Philip, taking her hand.

"Yes, at times I have slight spasms, and sometimes the blood mounts to my head, and my temples throb; sometimes again I feel quite giddy, and my heart sinks within me."

"Oh," said Philip, dreamily, "that is not surprising; you have met with a dreadful trial, and your escape was almost miraculous."

"Miraculous is in truth the proper term, brother."

"But, speaking of your miraculous escape, Andrée," said Philip, approaching closer to his sister, to give more emphasis to the question, "do you know I have never yet had an opportunity of speaking to you of this catastrophe?"

Andrée blushed and seemed uneasy, but Philip did not remark this change of colour, or at least did not appear to remark it.

"I thought, however," said the young girl, "that the person who restored me to you gave all the explanations you could wish; my father, at least, told me he was quite satisfied."

"Of course, my dear Andrée; and this man, so far as I could judge, behaved with extreme delicacy in the whole affair; but still some parts of his tale seemed to me, not suspicious indeed, but obscure — that is the proper term."

"How so, and what do you mean, brother?" asked Andrée, with the frankness of innocence.

"For instance," said Philip, "there is one point which did not at first strike me, but which has since seemed to me to bear a very strange aspect."

"Which?" asked Andrée.

"Why, the very manner in which you were saved. Can you describe it to me?"

The young girl seemed to make an effort over herself.

"Oh! Philip," said she, "I have almost forgotten — I was so much terrified."

"No matter, my sweetest Andrée; tell me all you remember."

"Well, you know, brother, we were separated about twenty paces from the Garde Meuble. I saw you dragged away towards the garden of the Tuilleries, while I was drawn towards the Rue Royale. For an instant I could distinguish you making fruitless attempts to rejoin me. I stretched out my arms towards you, crying, Philip! Philip! when all at once I was, as it were, seized by a whirlwind, which raised me aloft and bore me in the direction of the

railings. I felt the living tide carrying me towards the wall, where I must be dashed to atoms; I heard the cries of those who were crushed against the railings; I felt that my turn would come to be crushed and mangled; I could almost calculate the number of seconds I had yet to live, when, half dead and almost frantic, raising my hands and eyes to heaven in a last prayer, I met the burning glance of a man who seemed to govern the crowd, and whom the crowd seemed to obey."

"And this man was the Count Joseph Balsamo?"

"Yes; the same whom I had already seen at Taverney — the same who, even there, inspired me with such a strange terror; he, in short, who seems to be endowed with some supernatural power, who has fascinated my sight with his eyes, my ears with his voice; who has made my whole being tremble by the mere touch of his finger on my shoulder."

"Proceed, proceed, Andrée," said Philip, his features and voice becoming gloomier as she spoke.

"Well, this man seemed to tower aloft above the catastrophe, as if human suffering could not reach him. I read in his eyes that he wished to save me — that he had the power to do so. Then something extraordinary took place in me and around me. Bruised, powerless, half dead as I was, I felt myself raised towards this man as if some unknown, mysterious, invincible power drew me to him. I felt as if some strong arm, by a mighty effort, was lifting me out of the gulf of mangled flesh in which so many unhappy victims were suffocating, and was restoring me to air, to life. Oh, Philip!" continued Andrée, with a sort of feverish vehemence, "I feel certain it was that man's look which attracted me to him. I reached his hand; I was saved!"

"Alas!" murmured Gilbert, "she had eyes only for him; and I — I — who was dying at her feet — she saw me not!"

He wiped his brow, bathed in perspiration.

"That is how the affair happened, then?" asked Philip.

"Yes; up to the moment when I felt myself out of danger. Then, whether all my force had been exhausted in the last effort I had made, or whether the terror I had experienced had outstripped the measure of my strength, I do not know, but I fainted."

"And at what time do you think you fainted?"

"About ten minutes after we were separated, brother."

"Yes," pursued Philip, "that was about midnight. How then, did it happen that you did not return till three o'clock? Forgive me this catechising, which may seem ridiculous to you, dear Andrée, but I have a good reason for it."

"Thanks, Philip," said Andrée, pressing her brother's hand. "Three days ago I could not have replied to you as I have now done; but to-day — it may seem strange to you what I am about to say — but to-day my mental vision is stronger; it seems to me as if some will stronger than my own ordered me to remember, and I do remember."

"Then tell me, dear Andrée, for I am all impatience to know, did this man carry you away in his arms?"

"In his arms?" said Andrée, blushing; "I do not well recollect. All I know is, that he extricated me out of the crowd. But the touch of his hand caused me the same feeling as at Taverney, and scarcely had he touched me when I fainted again, or rather, I sunk to sleep; for fainting is generally preceded by a painful feeling, and on this occasion I only felt the pleasing sensation attendant on sleep."

"In truth, Andrée, what you tell me seems so strange, that if any other related these things, I should not believe them. But proceed," continued he, in a voice which betrayed more emotion than he was willing to let appear.

As for Gilbert, he devoured Andrée's every word, for he knew that, so far at least, each word was true.

"When I regained my consciousness," continued the young girl, "I was in a splendidly furnished salon. A femme-de-chambre and a lady were standing beside me, but

they did not seem at all uneasy, for when I awoke they were smiling benevolently."

"Do you know what time this was, Andrée?"

"The half-hour after midnight was just striking."

"Oh!" said the young man, breathing freely, "that is well. Proceed, Andrée, with your narrative."

"I thanked the ladies for the attentions they lavished on me; but knowing how uneasy you would be, I begged them to send me home immediately. Then they told me that the count had returned to the scene of the accident to assist the wounded, but that he would return with a carriage and convey me back himself to our hotel. In fact, about two o'clock I heard a carriage roll along the street; then the same sensation which I had formerly felt on the approach of that man overpowered me; I fell back trembling and almost senseless upon a sofa. The door opened. In the midst of my confusion I could still recognise the man who had saved me; then for a second time I lost all consciousness. They must then have carried me down, placed me in the carriage, and brought me here. That is all I can remember, brother."

Philip calculated the time, and saw that his sister must have been brought direct from the Rue des Ecuries-du-Louvre to the Rue Coq-Héron, as she had been from the Place Louis XV. to the Rue des Ecuries-du-Louvre; and, joyfully pressing her hand, he said in a frank, cheerful voice:

"Thanks, my dear sister, thanks; all the calculations correspond exactly. I will call upon the Marquise de Sévigny, and thank her in person. In the meantime, one word more upon a subject of secondary importance."

"Speak."

"Do you remember seeing among the crowd any face with which you were acquainted?"

"No; none."

"The little Gilbert's, for example?"

"In fact," said Andrée, endeavouring to recall her

thoughts, "I do remember to have seen him. At the moment when we were separated, he was about ten paces from me."

"She saw me!" murmured Gilbert.

"Because, while searching for you, Andrée, I discovered the poor lad."

"Among the dead?" asked Andrée, with that peculiar shade of interest which the great testify for their dependents.

"No, he was only wounded; he was saved, and I hope he will recover."

"Oh! I am glad to hear it," said Andrée; "and what injury had he received?"

"His chest was greatly bruised."

"Yes, yes, against thine, Andrée!" murmured Gilbert.

"But," continued Philip, "the strangest circumstance of all, and the one which induced me to speak of the lad, was, that I found in his hand, clenched and stiffened by pain, a fragment of your dress."

"That is strange, indeed."

"Did you not see him at the last moment?"

"At the last moment, Philip, I saw so many fearful forms of terror, pain, selfishness, love, pity, avarice, and indifference, that I felt as if I had passed a year in the realms of torment, and as if these figures were those of the damned passing in review before me. I may, therefore, have seen the young man, but I do not remember him."

"And yet the piece of stuff torn from your dress? — and it was your dress, Andrée, for Nicole has examined it."

"Did you tell the girl for what purpose you questioned her?" asked Andrée; for she remembered the singular explanation she had had at Taverney with her waiting-maid on the subject of this same Gilbert.

"Oh no. However, the fragment was in his hand. How can you explain that?"

"Oh! very easily," said Andrée, with a calmness which presented a strange contrast to the fearful beating of Gilbert's heart; "if he was near me when I felt myself

raised aloft, as it were, by this man's look, he has probably clung to me to profit by the help I was receiving, in the same manner as a drowning man clings to the belt of the swimmer."

"Oh!" said Gilbert, with a feeling of angry contempt at this explanation of the young girl; "Oh, what an ignoble interpretation of my devotion! How these nobles judge us sons of the people! Monsieur Rousseau is right; we are worth more than they; our hearts are purer, and our arms stronger."

As he once more settled himself to listen to the conversation of the brother and sister, which he had for a moment lost during this *aside*, he heard a noise behind him.

"Oh heavens!" murmured he, "some one in the ante-room!"

And hearing the step approach the corridor, Gilbert drew back into the dressing-room, letting the curtain fall before him.

"Well! Is that madcap Nicole not here?" said the Baron de Taverney's voice, as he entered his daughter's apartment, touching Gilbert with the flaps of his coat as he passed.

"I dare say she is in the garden," said Andrée, with a tranquillity which showed that she had no suspicion of the presence of a third person; "good-evening, my dear father."

Philip rose respectfully; the baron motioned him to remain where he was, and taking an arm-chair, sat down near his children.

"Ah! my children," said the baron, "it is a long journey from the Rue Coq-Héron to Versailles, when, instead of going in a good court carriage, you have only a fiacre drawn by one horse. However, I saw the dauphiness, nevertheless."

"Ah!" said Andrée, "then you have just arrived from Versailles, my dear father?"

"Yes; the princess did me the honour to send for me,

having heard of the accident which had happened to my daughter."

"Andrée is much better, father," said Philip.

"I am perfectly aware of it, and I told her royal highness so, who was kind enough to promise that, as soon as your sister is completely restored, she will summon her to Petit-Trianon, which she has fixed upon for her residence, and which she is now having decorated according to her taste."

"I—I at court!" said Andrée, timidly.

"It is not the court, my child. The dauphiness has quiet and unobtrusive habits, and the dauphin hates show and noise. They will live in complete retirement at Trianon. However, from what I know of her highness the dauphiness's disposition, her little family parties will turn out in the end much better than Beds of Justice and meetings of States-General. The princess has a decided character, and the dauphin, I am told, is learned."

"Oh, it will always be the court! Do not deceive yourself, sister," said Philip, mournfully.

"The court!" said Gilbert to himself, with an emotion of concentrated rage and despair. "The court! that is a summit which I cannot reach, or a gulf into which I cannot dash myself. In that case, farewell, Andrée! Lost!—lost to me for ever!"

"But, my father," replied Andrée, "we have neither the fortune which would warrant our choosing such a residence, nor the education necessary for those who move in its lofty circle. What shall I, a poor girl, do among those brilliant ladies, whose dazzling splendour I on one occasion witnessed, whose minds I thought so empty, but at the same time so sparkling? Alas! my brother, we are too obscure to mingle among so many dazzling lights."

The baron knit his brow.

"Still the same absurd ideas!" said he. "In truth, I cannot understand the pains which my family take to depreciate everything which they inherit from me, or which

relates to me. Obscure! Really, mademoiselle, you are mad. Obscure! — a Taverney-Maison-Rouge obscure! And who will shine, pray, if you do not? Fortune? — *pardieu!* we know what the fortunes of the court are. The sun of royalty fills them, the same sun makes them blow — it is the great vivifier of court nature. I have ruined myself at court, and now I shall grow rich again at court, that's all. Has the king no more money to bestow upon his faithful servants? And do you really think I would blush at a regiment being offered to my eldest son, at a dowry being granted to you, Andrée, at a nice little appanage conferred on myself, or at finding a handsome pension under my napkin some day at dinner? No, no, fools alone have prejudices; I have none. Besides, it is only my own property which is given back to me. Do not, therefore, entertain these foolish scruples. There remains only one of your objections — your education, of which you spoke just now. But, mademoiselle, remember, that no young lady of the court has been educated as you have been. Nay, more; you have, besides the education usually given to the daughters of the noblesse, the solid acquirements more generally confined to the families of lawyers or financiers. You are a musician, and you draw landscapes, with sheep and cows, which Berghem need not disclaim. Now, the dauphiness absolutely dotes on cows, on sheep, and on Berghem. You are beautiful; the king cannot fail to notice it. You can converse; that will charm the Count d'Artois and the Count de Provence: you will not only be well received, therefore, but adored. Yes, yes," continued the baron, rubbing his hands, and chuckling in so strange a manner that Philip gazed at his father to see if the laugh was really produced by a human mouth, "adored! I have said the word."

Andrée cast down her eyes, and Philip, taking her hand, said, —

"Our father is right, Andrée, you are everything he described. None can be more worthy to enter Versailles than you."

"But I shall be separated from you," replied Andrée.

"By no means, by no means," interrupted the baron; "Versailles is large, my dear."

"Yes, but Trianon is little," replied Andrée, haughty and rather unmanageable when she was opposed.

"Trianon will always be large enough to provide a chamber for M. de Taverney. A man such as I am always finds room," added he, with a modesty which meant — always knows how to make room for himself.

Andrée, not much comforted by this promised proximity of her father, turned to Philip.

"My sister," said the latter, "you will certainly not belong to what is called the court. Instead of placing you in a convent and paying your dowry, the dauphiness, who wishes to distinguish you, will keep you near herself in some employment. Etiquette is not so rigid now as in the time of Louis XIV. Offices are more easily fused together and separated. You can occupy the post of reader or companion to the dauphiness; she will draw with you, she will always keep you near her; probably you will never appear in public, but you will enjoy her immediate protection, and consequently, will inspire envy. That is what you fear, is it not?"

"Yes, my brother."

"However," said the baron, "we shall not grieve for such a trifle as one or two envious persons. Get better quickly, therefore, Andrée, and I shall have the pleasure of taking you to Trianon myself: it is the dauphiness's commands."

"Very well, father, I shall go."

"Apropos, Philip, have you any money?" asked the baron.

"If you want some, sir," replied the young man, "I have not enough to offer you; if you wish to give me some, I shall answer you, on the contrary, that I have enough for myself."

"True, you are a philosopher," said the baron, laughing

sarcastically. "Are you a philosopher, also, Andrée, who have nothing to ask from me, or is there anything you wish for?"

"I am afraid of embarrassing you, father."

"Oh! we are not at Taverney now. The king has sent me five hundred louis-d'or; on account, his Majesty said. Think of your wardrobe, Andrée."

"Thank you, my dear father," said the young girl, joyously.

"There, there," said the baron, "see the extremes. Only a minute ago she wanted nothing, now she would ruin the Emperor of China. But no matter, ask — fine dresses will become you well, Andrée."

Then, giving her a very affectionate kiss, the baron opened the door of an apartment which separated his own from his daughter's chamber, and left the room, saying:

"That cursed Nicole is not here to show me light."

"Shall I ring for her, father?"

"No, I have La Brie, who is sleeping in some arm-chair or other; good-night, my children."

Philip now rose in his turn.

"Good-night, brother," said Andrée. "I am dreadfully tired. It is the first time I have spoken so much since my accident. Good-night, dear Philip."

And she gave her hand to the young man, who kissed it with brotherly affection, but at the same time with a sort of respect with which his sister always inspired him, and retired, touching, as he passed, the door behind which Gilbert was concealed.

"Shall I call Nicole?" asked he, as he left the room.

"No, no," said Andrée, "I can undress alone: adieu, Philip."

CHAPTER LXXIII.

WHAT GILBERT HAD FORESEEN.

WHEN Andrée was alone she rose from the chair, and a shudder passed through Gilbert's frame.

The young girl stood upright, and with her hands, white as alabaster, she took the hair-pins one by one from her head-dress, while the light shawl in which she was wrapped slipped from her shoulders, and showed her snowy graceful neck, and her arms, which, raised carelessly above her head, displayed to advantage the muscles of her exquisite throat and bosom, palpitating under the cambric.

Gilbert, on his knees, breathless, intoxicated, felt the blood rush furiously to his heart and forehead. Fiery waves circulated in his veins, a cloud of flame descended over his sight, and strange feverish noises boiled in his ears. His state of mind bordered on madness. He was on the point of crossing the threshold of Andrée's door, and crying :

“ Yes, thou art beautiful, thou art indeed beautiful ! But be not so proud of thy beauty, for thou owest it to me — I saved thy life ! ”

All at once, a knot in her waist-band embarrassed the young girl ; she became impatient, stamped with her foot, and sat down weak and trembling on her bed, as if this slight obstacle had overcome her strength. Then, bending towards the cord of the bell, she pulled it impatiently.

This noise recalled Gilbert to his senses. Nicole had left the door open to hear, therefore she would come.

“ Farewell, my dream ! ” murmured he. “ Farewell, happiness ! henceforth only a baseless vision — henceforth

only a remembrance, ever burning in my imagination, ever present to my heart!"

Gilbert endeavoured to rush from the pavilion, but the baron on entering had closed the doors of the corridor after him. Not calculating on this interruption, he was some moments before he could open them.

Just as he entered Nicole's apartment, Nicole reached the pavilion. The young man heard the gravel of the garden walk grinding under her steps. He had only time to conceal himself in the shade, in order to let the young girl pass him; for after crossing the antechamber, the door of which she locked, she flew along the corridor as light as a bird.

Gilbert gained the antechamber and attempted to escape into the garden, but Nicole, whilst running on and crying: "I am coming, mademoiselle! I am coming! I am just closing the door!" had closed it indeed, and not only closed it and double-locked it, but in her confusion had put the key into her pocket.

Gilbert tried in vain to open the door. Then he had recourse to the windows, but they were barred, and after five minutes' investigation, he saw that it was impossible to escape.

The young man crouched into a corner, fortifying himself with the firm resolve to make Nicole open the door for him.

As for the latter, when she had given the plausible excuse for her absence, that she had gone to close the windows of the greenhouse, lest the night air might injure her young lady's flowers, she finished undressing André, and assisted her to bed.

There was a tremulousness in Nicole's voice, an unsteadiness in her hands, and an eagerness in all her attentions, which were very unusual, and indicated some extraordinary emotion. But from the calm and lofty sphere in which André's thoughts revolved, she rarely looked down upon the lower earth, and when she did so, the inferior beings

whom she saw seemed like atoms in her eyes. She therefore perceived nothing. Meanwhile Gilbert was boiling with impatience, since he found the retreat thus cut off. He now longed only for liberty.

Andrée dismissed Nicole after a short chat, in which the latter exhibited all the wheedling manner of a remorseful waiting-maid.

Before retiring, she turned back her mistress's coverlet, lowered the lamp, sweetened the warm drink which was standing in a silver goblet upon an alabaster night lamp, wished her mistress good-night in her sweetest voice, and left the room on tiptoe. As she came out she closed the glass door. Then, humming gaily, as if her mind was perfectly tranquil, she crossed the antechamber and advanced towards the door leading into the garden.

Gilbert guessed Nicole's intention, and for a moment he asked himself if he should not, in place of making himself known, slip out suddenly, taking advantage of the opportunity to escape when the door should be opened. But in that case he would be seen without being recognised, and he would be taken for a robber. Nicole would cry for help, he would not have time to reach the cord, and even if he should reach it, he would be seen in his aerial flight, his retreat discovered, and himself made the object of the Taverneys' displeasure, which could not fail to be deep and lasting, considering the feeling evinced towards him by the head of the family.

True, he might expose Nicole, and procure her dismissal ; but of what use would that be to him ? He would in that case have done evil without reaping any corresponding advantage, in short, from pure revenge ; and Gilbert was not so feeble-minded as to feel satisfied when he was revenged. Useless revenge was to him worse than a bad action, it was folly.

As Nicole approached the door where Gilbert was in waiting, he suddenly emerged from the shadow in which he was concealed, and appeared to the young girl in the full

rays of the moonlight which was streaming through the window. Nicole was on the point of crying out, but she took Gilbert for another, and said, after the first emotion of terror was passed :

“ You here ! What imprudence ! ”

“ Yes, it is I,” replied Gilbert, in a whisper ; “ but do not cry out for me more than you would do for another.”

This time Nicole recognised her interlocutor.

“ Gilbert ! ” she exclaimed, “ oh, heaven ! ”

“ I requested you not to cry out,” said the young man, coldly.

“ But what are you doing here, monsieur ? ” exclaimed Nicole, angrily.

“ Come,” said Gilbert, as coolly as before, “ a moment ago you called me imprudent, and now you are more imprudent than I.”

“ I think I am only too kind to you in asking what you are doing here,” said Nicole ; “ for I know very well.”

“ What am I doing then ? ”

“ You came to see Mademoiselle Andrée.”

“ Mademoiselle Andrée ? ” said Gilbert, as calmly as before.

“ Yes, you are in love with her ; but, fortunately, she does not love you.”

“ Indeed ? ”

“ But take care, Monsieur Gilbert,” said Nicole, threateningly.

“ Oh, I must take care ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Of what ? ”

“ Take care that I do not inform on you.”

“ You, Nicole ? ”

“ Yes, I ; take care I don’t get you dismissed from the house.”

“ Try,” said Gilbert, smiling.

“ You defy me.”

“ Yes, absolutely defy you.”

“What will happen, then, if I tell mademoiselle, Monsieur Philip, and the baron, that I met you here ?”

“It will happen as you have said — not that I shall be dismissed — I am, thank God, dismissed already — but that I shall be tracked and hunted like a wild beast. But she who will be dismissed will be Nicole.”

“How Nicole ?”

“Certainly; Nicole, who has stones thrown to her over the walls.”

“Take care, Monsieur Gilbert,” said Nicole, in a threatening tone, “a piece of mademoiselle’s dress was found in your hand upon the Place Louis XV.”

“You think so ?”

“Monsieur Philip told his father so. He suspects nothing as yet, but if he gets a hint or two, perhaps he will suspect in the end.”

“And who will give him the hint ?”

“I shall.”

“Take care, Nicole ! One might suspect, also, that when you seem to be drying lace, you are picking up the stones that are thrown over the wall !”

“It is false !” cried Nicole. Then, retracting her denial, she continued : “At all events, it is not a crime to receive a letter — not like stealing in here while mademoiselle is undressing. Ah ! what will you say to that, Monsieur Gilbert ?”

“I shall say, Mademoiselle Nicole, that it is also a crime for such a well-conducted young lady as you are to slip keys under the doors of gardens.”

Nicole trembled.

“I shall say,” continued Gilbert, “that if I, who am known to M. de Taverney, to Monsieur Philip, to Mademoiselle Andrée, have committed a crime in entering here, in my anxiety to know how the family I so long served were, and particularly Mademoiselle Andrée, whom I endeavoured so strenuously to save on the evening of the fireworks, that a piece of her dress remained in my hand — I shall say,

that if I have committed this pardonable crime, you have committed the unpardonable one of introducing a stranger into your master's house, and are now going to meet him a second time, in the greenhouse, where you have already spent an hour in his company — ”

“ Gilbert ! Gilbert ! ”

“ Oh ! how virtuous we are, all of a sudden, Mademoiselle Nicole ! You deem it very wicked that I should be found here, whilst — ”

“ Gilbert ! ”

“ Yes, go and tell mademoiselle that I love her. I shall say that it is you whom I love, and she will believe me, for you were foolish enough to tell her so at Taverney.”

“ Gilbert, my friend ! ”

“ And you will be dismissed, Nicole ; and in place of going to Trianon, and entering the household of the dauphiness with mademoiselle — instead of coquetting with the fine lords and rich gentlemen, as you will not fail to do if you remain with the family — instead of all this, you will be sent to enjoy the society of your admirer, Monsieur Beausire, an exempt, a soldier ! Oh ! what a direful fall ! What a noble ambition Mademoiselle Nicole's is — to be the favoured fair one of a guardsman ! ”

And Gilbert began to hum, in a low voice, with a most malicious accent :

“ In the Garde Française
I had a faithful lover.”

“ In mercy, Monsieur Gilbert,” said Nicole, “ do not look at me in that ill-natured manner. Your eyes pierce me, even in the darkness. Do not laugh, either ; your laugh terrifies me.”

“ Then open the door,” said Gilbert, imperatively ; “ open the door for me, Nicole, and not another word of all this.”

Nicole opened the door with so violent a nervous trembling that her shoulders and head shook like those of an old woman.

Gilbert tranquilly stepped out first, and seeing that the young girl was leading him towards the door of the garden, he said :

"No, no ; you have your means for admitting people here, I have my means for leaving it. Go to the greenhouse, to Monsieur Beausire, who must be waiting impatiently for you, and remain with him ten minutes longer than you intended to do. I will grant you this recompense for your discretion."

"Ten minutes, and why ten minutes ?" asked Nicole, trembling.

"Because I require ten minutes to disappear. Go, Nicole, go ; and, like Lot's wife, whose story I told you at Taverney, when you gave me a rendezvous among the haystacks, do not turn round, else something worse will happen to you than to be changed into a statue of salt. Go, beautiful siren, go ; I have nothing else to say to you."

Nicole, subdued, alarmed, conquered, by the coolness and presence of mind shown by Gilbert, who held her future destiny in his hands, turned with drooping head towards the greenhouse, where Beausire was already uneasy at her prolonged absence.

Gilbert, on his side, observing the same precautions as before to avoid discovery, once more reached the wall, seized his rope, and, assisted by the vine and trellis-work, gained the first story in safety, and quickly ascended the stairs. As luck would have it, he met no one on his way up ; the neighbours were already to bed, and Thérèse was still at supper.

Gilbert was too much excited by his victory over Nicole to entertain the least fear of missing his foot in the leaden gutter. He felt as if he could have walked on the edge of a sharpened razor, had the razor been a league long. He regained his attic in safety therefore, closed the window, seized the note, which no one had touched, and tore it in pieces. Then he stretched himself with a delicious feeling of languor upon his bed.

Half-an-hour afterwards Thérèse kept her word, and came to the door to inquire how he was. Gilbert thanked her, in a voice interrupted by terrific yawns, as if he were dying of sleep. He was eager to be alone, quite alone, in darkness and silence, to collect his thoughts, and analyse the varied emotions of this ever-memorable day.

Soon, indeed, everything faded from his mind's eye ; the baron, Philip, Nicole, Beausire, disappeared from view, to give place to the vision of Andrée at her toilet, her arms raised above her head, and detaching the pins from her long and flowing hair.

CHAPTER LXXIV.

THE BOTANISTS.

THE events which we have just related happened on Friday evening; so that it was the second day after, that the excursion which Rousseau looked forward to with so much pleasure was to take place.

Gilbert, indifferent to everything since he had heard that Andrée was so soon to depart for Trianon, had spent the entire day leaning on his window-sill. During this day the window of Andrée's room remained open, and once or twice the young girl had approached it as if to breathe the fresh air. She was pale and weak; but it seemed to Gilbert as if he would wish for nothing more than that Andrée should always inhabit that pavilion, that he should always have his attic, and that, once or twice every day, Andrée should come to the window as he had seen her that day.

The long looked-for Sunday at last arrived. Rousseau had already made his preparations the day before: his shoes were carefully blackened, and his grey coat, at once light and warm, was taken from the chest, to the great annoyance of Thérèse, who thought a blouse or a linen frock quite good enough for such a purpose. But Rousseau had completed his toilet without replying. Not only his own clothes, but Gilbert's also, had been passed in review with the greatest care, and the latter's had even been augmented by a pair of irreproachable stockings and new shoes, which Rousseau had presented him with as an agreeable surprise.

The herbal also was put in the nicest trim. Rousseau had not forgotten his collection of mosses, which was to play a part in the proceedings of the day. Impatient as a child, he hastened more than twenty times to the window to see if the carriage that was passing was not Monsieur de Jussieu's. At last he perceived a highly-varnished chariot, a pair of splendid horses with rich harness, and an immense powdered footman standing at his door. He ran instantly to Thérèse, exclaiming:

“Here it is! here it is!”

And crying to Gilbert:

“Quick, quick, the carriage is waiting.”

“Well,” said Thérèse, sharply, “if you are so fond of riding in a coach, why did you not work in order to have one of your own, like Monsieur de Voltaire?”

“Be quiet!” grumbled Rousseau.

“*Dame!* you always say you have as much talent as he.”

“I do not say so, hark you!” cried Rousseau, in a rage; “I say—I say nothing!”

And all his joy fled, as it invariably did, at the mention of that hated name. Luckily Monsieur de Jussieu entered.

He was pomatumed, powdered, fresh as the spring. His dress consisted of a splendid coat of ribbed Indian satin, of a light grey colour, a vest of pale lilac silk, white silk stockings of extraordinary fineness, and bright gold buckles.

On entering Rousseau's apartment he filled the room with a delightful perfume, which Thérèse inhaled without concealing her admiration.

“How handsome you are!” said Rousseau, looking askance at Thérèse, and comparing his modest dress and clumsy equipment with the elegant toilet of Monsieur de Jussieu.

“Oh, I am afraid of the heat,” said the elegant botanist.

“But the wood is damp. If we botanise in the marshes, your silken stockings —”

"Oh, we can choose the driest places."

"And the aquatic mosses? Must we give them up for to-day?"

"Do not be uneasy about that, my dear colleague."

"One would think you were going to a ball, or to pay your respects to ladies."

"Why should we not honour Dame Nature with a pair of silk stockings?" replied Monsieur de Jussieu, rather embarrassed; "does she not deserve that we should dress ourselves for her?"

Rousseau said no more; from the moment that Monsieur de Jussieu invoked Nature, he agreed with him that it was impossible to honour her too highly.

As for Gilbert, notwithstanding his stoicism, he gazed at Monsieur de Jussieu with envious eyes. Since he had observed so many young exquisites enhance their natural advantages with dress, he had seen the utility, in a frivolous point of view, of elegance, and whispered to himself that this silk, this lace, this linen, would add a charm to his youth; and that if Andrée saw him dressed like Monsieur de Jussieu instead of as he was, she would then deign to look at him.

The carriage rolled off at the utmost speed of two fine Danish horses, and an hour after their departure the botanists alighted at Bougival, and turned to the left by the chestnut walk.

This walk, which at present is so surpassingly beautiful, was then at least quite as much so; for the portion of the rising ground which our explorers had to traverse, already planted by Louis XIV., had been the object of constant care since the king had taken a fancy to Marly.

The chestnut-trees, with their ruddy bark, their gigantic branches, and their fantastic forms — sometimes presenting in their knotty circumvolutions the appearance of a huge boa twining itself round the trunk, sometimes that of a bull prostrate upon the butcher's block and vomiting a stream of black and clotted blood; the moss-covered apple-

trees and the colossal walnuts, whose foliage was already assuming the dark-blue shade of summer; the solitude, the picturesque simplicity and grandeur of the landscape, which, with its old shadowy trees, stood out in bold relief against the clear blue sky,—all this, clothed with that simple and touching charm which nature ever lends to her productions, plunged Rousseau into a state of ecstasy impossible to be described.

Gilbert was calm, but moody; his whole being was absorbed in this one thought:

“Andrée leaves the garden pavilion and goes to Trianon.”

Upon the summit of the little hill, which the three botanists were climbing on foot, was seen the square tower of Luciennes.

The sight of this building, from which he had fled, changed the current of Gilbert’s thoughts, and recalled rather unpleasant recollections, unmixed, however, with fear. From his position in the rear of the party he saw two protectors before him; and, feeling himself in safety, he gazed at Luciennes as a shipwrecked sailor from the shore looks upon the sandbank upon which his vessel has struck.

Rousseau, spade in hand, began to fix his looks on the ground; Monsieur de Jussieu did the same, but with this difference, that the former was searching for plants, while the latter was only endeavouring to keep his stockings from the damp.

“What a splendid *Lepopodium!*” exclaimed Rousseau.

“Charming,” replied Monsieur de Jussieu; “but let us pass on, if you have no objection.”

“Ah! the *Lysimachia Fenella!* it is ready for culling; look!”

“Pluck it, then, if it gives you pleasure.”

“Oh! just as you please. But are we not botanising, then?”

“Yes, yes; but I think we shall find better upon that height, yonder.”

"As you please — let us go, then."

"What hour is it?" asked Monsieur de Jussieu; "in my hurry I forgot my watch."

Rousseau pulled a very large silver watch from his pocket.

"Nine o'clock," said he.

"Have you any objection that we should rest a little?" continued Monsieur de Jussieu.

"Oh, what a wretched walker you are!" said Rousseau. "You see what it is to botanise in fine shoes and silk stockings."

"Perhaps I am hungry."

"Well, then, let us breakfast; the village is about a quarter of a league from this."

"Oh, no; we need not go so far."

"How so? Have you our breakfast in your carriage?"

"Look yonder — into that thicket," said Monsieur de Jussieu, pointing with his hand towards the part of the horizon he indicated.

Rousseau stood upon tiptoe, and shaded his eyes with his hand.

"I can see nothing," said he.

"What! Do you not see that little rustic roof?"

"No."

"Surmounted by a weather-cock, and the walls thatched with red and white straw, — a sort of rustic cottage, in short?"

"Yes, I see it now; a little building seemingly newly erected."

"A *kiosk*, that is it."

"Well?"

"Well, we shall find there the little luncheon I promised you."

"Very good," said Rousseau. "Are you hungry, Gilbert?"

Gilbert, who had not paid any attention to this debate, and was employed in mechanically knocking off the heads of the wild flowers, replied:

"Whatever you please, monsieur."

"Come, then, if you please," said Monsieur de Jussieu; "besides, nothing need prevent our gathering simples on the way."

"Oh," said Rousseau, "your nephew is a more ardent botanist than you. I spent a day with him botanising in the woods of Montmorency, along with a select party. He finds well, he gathers well, he explains well."

"Oh! he is young; he has his name to make yet."

"Has he not yours already made? Oh! comrade, comrade, you botanise like an amateur."

"Come, do not be angry, my dear philosopher; hold! here is the beautiful *Plantago Monanthos*. Did you find anything like that at your Montmorency?"

"No, indeed," said Rousseau, quite delighted; "I have often searched for it in vain. Upon the faith of a naturalist it is magnificent!"

"Oh, the beautiful pavilion!" said Gilbert, who had passed from the rear-guard of the party into the van.

"Gilbert is hungry," replied Monsieur de Jussieu.

"Oh, monsieur, I beg your pardon; I can wait patiently until you are ready."

"Let us continue our task a little longer," said Rousseau, "inasmuch as botanising after a meal is bad for digestion; and besides, the eye is then heavy, and the back stiff. But what is this pavilion called?"

"The mouse-trap," answered Monsieur de Jussieu, remembering the name invented by Monsieur de Sartines.

"What a singular name!"

"Oh! the country, you know, is the place for indulging all sorts of caprices."

"To whom do those beautiful grounds belong?"

"I do not exactly know."

"You must know the proprietor, however, since you are going to breakfast there," said Rousseau, pricking up his ears with a slight shade of suspicion.

"Not at all—or rather, I know every one here, includ-

ing the gamekeepers, who have often seen me in their inclosures, and who always touch their hats, and sometimes offer me a hare or a string of woodcocks as a present from their masters. The people on this and the neighbouring estates let me do here just as if I were on my own grounds. I do not know exactly whether this summer-house belongs to Madame de Mirepoix or Madame d'Egmont, or—in short, I do not know to whom it belongs. But the most important point, my dear philosopher, I am sure you will agree with me, is, that we shall find there bread, fruit, and pastry."

The good-natured tone in which Monsieur de Jussieu spoke dispelled the cloud of suspicion which had already begun to darken Rousseau's brow. The philosopher wiped his feet on the grass, rubbed the mould off his hands, and, preceded by Monsieur de Jussieu, entered the mossy walk which wound gracefully beneath the chestnut-trees leading up to the hermitage.

Gilbert, who had again taken up his position in the rear, closed the march, dreaming of Andrée, and of the means of seeing her when she should be at Trianon.

CHAPTER LXXV.

THE PHILOSOPHERS IN THE TRAP.

ON the summit of the hill, which the three botanists were ascending with some difficulty, stood one of those little rustic retreats, with gnarled and knotty pillars, pointed gables, and windows festooned with ivy and clematis, which are the genuine offspring of English architecture, or to speak more correctly, of English gardening, which imitates Nature, or rather invents a species of nature for itself, thus giving a certain air of originality to its creations.

This summer-house, which was large enough to contain a table and six chairs, was floored with tiles and carpeted with handsome matting. The walls were covered with little mosaics of flint, the product of the river's beach, mingled with foreign shells of the most delicate tints, gathered from the shores of the Indian Ocean.

The ceiling was in relief, and was composed of fir-cones and knotty excrescences of bark, arranged so as to imitate hideous profiles of fauns or savage animals, who seemed suspended over the heads of the visitors. The windows were each stained with some different shade, so that, according as the spectator looked out of the violet, the red, or the blue glass, the woods of Vesinet seemed tinted by a stormy sky, bathed in the burning rays of an August sun, or sleeping beneath the cold and frosty atmosphere of December. The visitor had only to consult his taste, that is to say, choose his window, and look out.

This sight pleased Gilbert greatly, and he amused himself with looking through the different tinted windows at

the rich valley which lies stretched beneath the feet of a spectator situated on the hill of Luciennes, and at the noble Seine winding in the midst.

A sight nearly as interesting however, at least in Monsieur de Jussieu's opinion, was the tempting breakfast spread in the centre of the summer-house, upon a table formed of gnarled and fantastic woodwork, on which the bark had been allowed to remain.

There was the exquisite cream for which Marly is celebrated, the luscious apricots and plums of Luciennes, the crisp sausages of Nanterre smoking upon a porcelain dish, without the least trace being seen of any one who could have brought them thither; strawberries peeping from a graceful little basket lined with vine leaves, and, besides the fresh and glistening pats of butter, were rolls of homely peasant bread, with its rich brown crust, so dear to the pampered appetite of the inhabitant of towns. This sight drew an exclamation of admiration from Rousseau, who, philosopher as he was, was not the less an unaffected gourmand, for his appetite was as keen as his taste was simple.

“What folly!” said he to Monsieur de Jussieu; “bread and fruit would have been sufficient, and even then, as true botanists and industrious explorers, we ought to have eaten the bread and munched the plums without ceasing our search among the grass or along the hedge-rows. Do you remember, Gilbert, our luncheon at Plessis-Piquet?”

“Yes, monsieur; the bread and cherries which appeared to me so delicious?”

“Yes, that is how true lovers of nature should breakfast.”

“But, my dear master,” interrupted Monsieur de Jussieu, “if you reproach me with extravagance, you are wrong; a more modest meal was never—”

“Oh!” cried the philosopher, “you do your table injustice, Monseigneur Lucullus.”

“*My* table?—by no means,” said Jussieu.

“Who are our hosts, then?” resumed Rousseau, with a

smile which evinced at once good humour and constraint, "Sprites?"

"Or fairies!" said Monsieur de Jussieu, rising, and glancing stealthily towards the door.

"Fairies?" exclaimed Rousseau, gaily; "a thousand blessings on them for their hospitality! I am excessively hungry. Come, Gilbert, fall to."

And he cut a very respectable slice from the brown loaf, passing the bread and the knife to his disciple. Then, while taking a huge bite, he chose out some plums from the dish.

Gilbert hesitated.

"Come, come!" said Rousseau. "The fairies will be offended by your stiffness, and will imagine you are dissatisfied with their banquet."

"Or that it is unworthy of you, gentlemen," uttered a silvery voice from the door of the pavilion, where two young and lovely women appeared, arm in arm, smiling, and making signs to Monsieur de Jussieu to moderate his obeisances.

Rousseau turned, holding the half-tasted bread in his right hand and the remains of a plum in his left, and beholding these two goddesses, at least such they seemed to him by their youth and beauty, he remained stupefied with astonishment, bowing mechanically, and retreating toward the wall of the summer-house.

"Oh, countess!" said Monsieur de Jussieu, "you here? What a delightful surprise!"

"Good-day, my dear botanist," said one of the ladies, with a grace and familiarity perfectly regal.

"Allow me to present Monsieur Rousseau to you," said Jussieu, taking the philosopher by the hand which held the brown bread.

Gilbert also had seen and recognised the ladies. He opened his eyes to their utmost width, and, pale as death, looked out of the window of the summer-house, with the idea of throwing himself from it.

"Good-day, my little philosopher," said the other lady

to the almost lifeless Gilbert, patting his cheek with her rosy fingers.

Rousseau saw and heard—he was almost choking with rage. His disciple knew these goddesses, and was known to them. Gilbert was almost fainting.

“Do you not know madame, the countess, Monsieur Rousseau?” asked Jussieu.

“No,” replied he, thunderstruck; “it is the first time, I think—”

“Madame Dubarry,” continued Monsieur de Jussieu. Rousseau started up, as if he stood on a red-hot plough-share.

“Madame Dubarry!” he exclaimed.

“The same, monsieur,” said the young lady, with surpassing grace, “who is most happy to have received in her house, and to have been favoured with a nearer view of, the most illustrious thinker of the age.”

“Madame Dubarry!” continued Rousseau, without remarking that his astonishment was becoming a grave offence against good breeding. “She! and doubtless this pavilion is hers, and doubtless it is she who has provided this breakfast.”

“You have guessed rightly, my dear philosopher; she and her sister,” continued Jussieu, ill at ease in presence of this threatening storm.

“Her sister, who knows Gilbert!”

“Intimately,” replied Chon, with that saucy boldness which respected neither royal whims nor philosophers’ fancies.

Gilbert looked as if he wished the earth would open and swallow him, so fiercely did Rousseau’s eye rest upon him.

“Intimately!” repeated Rousseau; “Gilbert knew madame intimately, and I was not told of it? But in that case I was betrayed, I was sported with.”

Chon and her sister looked at each other with a malicious smile.

Monsieur de Jussieu, in his agitation, tore a Malines ruffle worth forty louis-d'or.

Gilbert clasped his hands as if to entreat Chon to be silent, or Monsieur Rousseau to speak more graciously to him. But, on the contrary, it was Rousseau who was silent, and Chon who spoke.

"Yes," said she, "Gilbert and I are old friends; he was a guest of mine. Were you not, little one?—What! are you already ungrateful for the sweatmeats of Luciennes and Versailles?"

This was the final blow; Rousseau's arms fell stiff and motionless.

"Oh!" said he, looking askance at the young man, "that was the way, was it, you little scoundrel?"

"Monsieur Rousseau!" murmured Gilbert.

"Why, one would think you were weeping for the little tap I gave your cheek," continued Chon. "Well, I always feared you were ungrateful."

"Mademoiselle!" entreated Gilbert.

"Little one," said Madame Dubarry, "return to Luciennes; your bonbons and Zamore await you, and though you left it in rather a strange manner, you shall be well received."

"Thank you, madame," said Gilbert, drily; "when I leave a place, it is because I do not like it."

"And why refuse the favour that is offered to you?" interrupted Rousseau, bitterly. "You have tasted of wealth, my dear Monsieur Gilbert, and you had better return to it."

"But, monsieur, when I swear to you—".

"Go!—go! I do not like those who blow hot and cold with the same breath."

"But you will not listen to me, Monsieur Rousseau."

"Well?"

"I ran away from Luciennes, where I was kept locked up."

"A trap!—I know the malice of men."

"But, since I preferred you to them, since I accepted you as my host, my protector, my master—"

“Hypocrisy!”

“But, Monsieur Rousseau, if I wished for riches, I should accept the offer these ladies have made me.”

“Monsieur Gilbert, I have been often deceived, but never twice by the same person; you are free, go where you please.”

“But where? Good heavens!” cried Gilbert, plunged in an abyss of despair, for he saw his window, and the neighbourhood of Andrée, and his love, lost to him forever—for his pride was hurt at being suspected of treachery; and the idea that his self-denial, his long and arduous struggle against the indolence and the passions natural to his age, was misconstrued and despised, stung him to the quick.

“Where?” said Rousseau. “Why, in the first place, to this lady, of course; where could you meet a lovelier or more worthy protector?”

“Oh, my God! my God!” cried Gilbert, burying his head in his hands.

“Do not be afraid,” said Monsieur de Jussieu, deeply wounded, as a man of the world, by Rousseau’s strange sally against the ladies; “you will be taken care of, and whatever you may lose in one way, you will be amply compensated for.”

“You see,” said Rousseau, bitterly, “there is Monsieur de Jussieu, a learned man, a lover of nature, one of your accomplices,” added he, with a grin which was meant for a smile, “who promises you assistance and fortune, and you may be sure that what Monsieur de Jussieu promises he can perform.”

As he spoke, Rousseau, no longer master of himself, bowed to the ladies with a most majestic air, did the same to Monsieur de Jussieu, and then, without even looking at Gilbert, he calmly left the pavilion.

“Oh, what an ugly animal a philosopher is!” said Chon, coolly, looking after the Genevese, who walked, or rather stumbled, down the path.

“Ask what you wish,” said Monsieur de Jussieu to Gilbert, who still kept his face buried in his hands.

"Yes, ask, Monsieur Gilbert," added the countess, smiling on the abandoned disciple.

The latter raised his pale face, pushed back the hair which perspiration and tears had matted over his forehead, and said with a firm voice:

"Since you are kind enough to offer me an employment, I would wish to be assistant-gardener at Trianon."

Chon and the countess looked at each other, and the former, with her tiny little foot, touched her sister's with a triumphant glance. The countess made a sign with her head that she understood perfectly.

"Is that practicable, Monsieur de Jussieu?" asked the countess. "I should wish it very much."

"If you wish it, madame," replied he, "it is done."

Gilbert bowed, and put his hand upon his heart, which now bounded with joy, as a few moments before it had been overwhelmed with grief.

CHAPTER LXXVI.

THE APOLOGUE.

IN that little cabinet at Luciennes, where we have seen the Count Jean Dubarry imbibe so much chocolate, to the great annoyance of the countess, the Marshal de Richelieu was lunching with Madame Dubarry, who, while amusing herself with pulling Zamore's ears, carelessly reclined at full length upon a couch of brocaded satin, whilst the old courtier uttered sighs of admiration at each new position the charming creature assumed.

"Oh, countess!" said he, smirking like an old woman, "your hair is falling down; look, there is a ringlet drooping on your neck. Ah! your slipper is falling off, countess."

"Bah! my dear duke, never mind," said she, absently, and pulling a handful of hair from Zamore's head while she took a fresh position on the couch, more lovely and fascinating than that of Venus in her shell.

Zamore, entirely insensible to these graceful attitudes, bellowed with anger. The countess endeavoured to quiet him by taking a handful of sugar-plums from the table, and filling his pockets with them. But Zamore was sulky, turned his pocket inside out, and emptied his sugar-plums upon the carpet.

"Oh, the little scoundrel!" continued the countess, stretching out her tiny foot till it came in contact with the fantastic hose of the little negro.

"Oh, have mercy!" cried the old marshal; "upon my faith, you will kill him."

"Why cannot I kill everything which angers me to-day?" said the countess; "I feel merciless."

"Oh," said the duke, "then perhaps I displease you."

"Oh, no! quite the contrary; you are an old friend, and I perfectly adore you; but the fact is, I believe I am going mad."

"Can it be that those whom you have made mad have smitten you with their complaint?"

"Take care! you provoke me dreadfully with your gallant speeches, of which you do not believe one word."

"Countess, countess! I begin to think you are not mad, but ungrateful."

"No, I am neither mad nor ungrateful; I am—"

"Well, confess. What are you?"

"I am angry, duke."

"Indeed?"

"Are you surprised at that?"

"Not in the least, countess; and, upon my honour, you have reason to be so."

"Ah! that is what annoys me in you, marshal."

"Then there is something in my conduct which annoys you, countess?"

"Yes."

"And what is this something, pray? I am rather old to begin to correct my faults, and yet there is no effort I would not make for you."

"Well, it is that you do not even know what is the cause of my anger, marshal."

"Oh, is that all?"

"Then you know what vexes me?"

"Of course. Zamore has broken the Chinese fountain."

An imperceptible smile played around the young countess's mouth; but Zamore, who felt himself guilty, drooped his head humbly, as if the skies were pregnant with clouds of blows and kicks.

"Oh, yes!" said the countess, with a sigh; "yes, duke, you are right; that is it, and in truth you are a very deep politician."

"I have always been told so," replied Monsieur de Richelieu, with an air of profound modesty.

"Oh, I can see that without being told, duke. Have you not guessed the cause of my annoyance immediately, without looking to the right or left? It is superb."

"Superb, indeed; but still that is not all."

"Indeed!"

"No, I can guess something else."

"And what can you guess?"

"That you expected his Majesty yesterday evening."

"Where?"

"Here."

"Well! what then?"

"And that his Majesty did not come."

The countess reddened, and raised herself slightly upon her elbow.

"Oh!" said she.

"And yet," said the duke, "I have just arrived from Paris."

"Well, what does that prove?"

"*Pardieu!* that I could not of course know what passed at Versailles; and yet—"

"My dear duke, you are full of mystery to-day. When a person begins he should finish, or else not have commenced."

"You speak quite at your ease, countess. Allow me, at least, to take breath. Where was I?"

"You were at—'and yet.'"

"Oh, yes! true; and yet I not only know that his majesty did not come, but also why he did not come."

"Duke, I have always thought you a sorcerer; and only wanted proof to be certain of the fact."

"Well, that proof I will now give you."

The countess, who attached much more interest to this conversation than she wished to let appear, relinquished her hold of Zamore's head, in whose hair her long taper fingers had been carelessly playing.

“Give it, duke, give it,” said she.

“Before monseigneur the governor?” asked the duke.

“Vanish, Zamore,” said the countess to the negro boy, who, mad with delight, made only one bound from the boudoir to the ante-chamber

“An excellent step,” murmured Richelieu; “then I must tell you all, countess?”

“What! did that monkey, Zamore, embarrass you, duke?”

“To tell the truth, countess, any one can embarrass me.”

“Yes, I can understand that. But is Zamore any one?”

“Zamore is neither blind, deaf, nor dumb; therefore he is some one. I distinguish by the title of some one, every person who is my equal in the hearing, seeing, and speaking faculties, every person who can see what I do, hear and repeat what I say; every person, in short, who might betray me. This theory explained, I proceed.”

“Yes, yes, duke, proceed; you will gratify me exceedingly.”

“Gratify! I think not, countess; but no matter, I must go on. Well, the king was at Trianon yesterday.”

“The little or the great Trianon?”

“The little. The dauphiness was leaning on his arm.”

“Ah!”

“And the dauphiness, who is charming, as you know — ”

“Alas!”

“Coaxed him so much, with dear papa here, and dear papa there, that his majesty, who has a heart of gold, could not resist her. So after the walk came supper, and after supper amusing games; so that, in short — ”

“In short,” said Madame Dubarry, pale with impatience, “in short, the king did not come to Luciennes — that is what you would say?”

“Exactly.”

“Oh, it is perfectly easily explained; his majesty found there all that he loves.”

"Ah! by no means, and you are far from believing one word of what you say; all that pleases him he found, no doubt."

"Take care, duke, that is much worse; to sup, chat, and play is all that he wants. And with whom did he play?"

"With Monsieur de Choiseul."

The countess made an angry gesture.

"Shall I not pursue the subject further, countess?" asked Richelieu.

"On the contrary, monsieur, speak on."

"You are as courageous, madame, as you are witty; let me, therefore, take the bull by the horns, as the Spaniards say."

"Madame de Choiseul would not forgive you for that proverb, duke."

"Yet it is not inapplicable. I told you then, madame, that Monsieur de Choiseul, since I must name him, held the cards; and with so much good fortune, so much address—"

"That he won."

"By no means; that he lost, and that his majesty won a thousand louis-d'or at piquet, a game on which his Majesty piques himself very much, seeing that he plays it very badly."

"Oh! that Choiseul, that Choiseul!" murmured Madame Dubarry. "But Madame de Grammont was of the party also, was she not?"

"That is to say, countess, she was paying her respects before her departure."

"The duchess!"

"Yes; she is very foolish, I think."

"Why so?"

"Finding that no one persecutes her, she pouts; finding that no one exiles her, she exiles herself."

"Where to?"

"To the provinces."

"She is going to plot."

“Parbleu! what else would you expect her to do? Well, as she is about to set out, she very naturally wished to take leave of the dauphiness, who, naturally, is very fond of her. That is why she was at Trianon.”

“The great?”

“Of course. The little Trianon is not yet furnished.”

“Ah! her highness the dauphiness, by surrounding herself with all these Choiseuls, shows plainly which party she intends to embrace.”

“No, countess, do not let us exaggerate; to-morrow the duchess will be gone.”

“And the king was amused where I was absent!” cried the countess, with indignation not unmixed with terror.

“Yes; it is perfectly incredible, countess; but still it is so. Well, what do you conclude from it?”

“That you are well-informed, duke.”

“Is that all?”

“No.”

“Finish, then.”

“I gather from it that we shall all be lost if we do not rescue the king from the clutches of these Choiseuls, either with his consent or without it.”

“Alas!”

“I say we,” resumed the countess; “but do not fear, duke; I speak only of our own family.”

“And your friends, countess; permit me to claim that title. So then —”

“Then you are one of my friends?”

“I think I have said so, madame.”

“That is not enough.”

“I think I have proved it.”

“That is better. And you will assist me?”

“With all my power, countess; but —”

“But what?”

“I cannot conceal from you that the task is difficult.”

“Are these Choiseuls positively not to be rooted out, then?”

"They are firmly planted, at least."

"Then, whatever our friend, La Fontaine, may say, neither wind nor storm can prevail against this oak?"

"The minister is a lofty genius."

"Bah! you speak like an encyclopedist!"

"Am I not a member of the Académie?"

"Oh! you are so slightly so."

"True, you are right; my secretary is the member, not

I. But nevertheless, I maintain my opinion."

"But may I ask in what does this mighty genius shine?"

"In this, madame, that he has made such a piece of work with the parliament and the English, that the king cannot do without him."

"The parliament? Why, he excites it against his Majesty."

"Of course; therein lies his cleverness."

"He provokes the English to war."

"Of course; peace would ruin him."

"That is not genius, duke."

"What is it, then, countess?"

"It is high treason."

"When high treason is successful, countess, it is genius, and a lofty description of genius, too."

"Then, by that mode of reasoning, I know some one who is as great a genius as Monseur de Choiseul."

"Bah!"

"Why, he has at least caused the parliament to revolt."

"You puzzle me exceedingly, countess."

"Do you not know him, duke? He belongs to your own family."

"Can I have a man of genius in my family? Do you speak of my uncle, the cardinal duke, madame?"

"No; I mean the Duke d'Aiguillon, your nephew."

"Ah! Monsieur d'Aiguillon. Yes, true; it was he who set that affair of La Chalotais moving. 'Pon honour, he is a brave youth. Yes, true; that was a tough piece of work. Countess, there is a man whom a woman of spirit should gain over to her cause."

"Are you aware, duke," said the countess, "that I do not know your nephew?"

"Indeed, madame? You don't know him?"

"No; I have never seen him."

"Poor fellow! In fact, I now remember that since you came to court, he has always been at Brittany. Let him look to himself when he first sees you; he has not latterly been accustomed to the sun."

"What does he do among all those black gowns—a nobleman of spirit like him?"

"He revolutionises them, not being able to do better. You understand, countess, every one takes pleasure where they can find it, and there is not much to be had in Brittany. Ah! he is an active man. *Peste!* what a servant the king might have in him, if he wished! Parliament would not be insolent to him. Oh! he is a true Richelieu. Permit me, therefore, countess—"

"What?"

"To present him to you on his first appearance."

"Does he intend to visit Paris soon?"

"Oh, madame, who knows? Perhaps he will have to remain another lustre in Brittany, as that scoundrel, Voltaire, says; perhaps he is on his way hither; perhaps two hundred leagues off; or perhaps at the barrier."

And while he spoke, the marshal studied the lady's features to see what effect his words produced. But after having reflected for a moment, she said:

"Let us return to the point where we left off."

"Wherever you please, countess."

"Where were we?"

"At the moment when his majesty was enjoying himself so much at Trianon in the company of Monsieur de Choiseul."

"And when we were speaking of getting rid of this Choiseul, duke."

"That is to say, when you were speaking of getting rid of him, countess."

"Oh! I am so anxious that he should go," said the favourite, "that I think I shall die if he remains. Will you not assist me a little, my dear duke?"

"Oh," said Richelieu, bridling, "in politics, that is called an *overture*."

"Take it as you will, call it what you please, but answer categorically."

"Oh, what a long, ugly adverb, in such a pretty little mouth!"

"Do you call that answering, duke?"

"No, not exactly; I call that preparing my answer."

"Is it prepared?"

"Wait a little."

"You hesitate, duke?"

"Oh no!"

"Well, I am listening."

"What do you think of apologetics, countess?"

"Why, that they are very antiquated."

"Bah! the sun is antiquated also, and yet we have not invented any better means of seeing."

"Well, let me hear your *apologue*, then; but let it be clear."

"As crystal, fair lady. Let us suppose then, countess — you know one always supposes something in an *apologue*."

"How tiresome you are, duke!"

"You do not believe one word of what you say, countess, for you never listened to me more attentively."

"I was wrong, then; go on."

"Suppose, then, that you were walking in your beautiful garden at Luciennes, and that you saw a magnificent plum, — one of those Queen Claudes which you are so fond of, because their vermillion and purple tints resemble your own."

"Go on, flatterer."

"Well, I was saying, suppose you saw one of these plums at the extremity of one of the loftiest branches of the tree, what would you do, countess?"

“I would shake the tree, to be sure.”

“Yes, but in vain, for the tree is large and massive, and not to be rooted out, as you said just now; and you would soon perceive that without even succeeding in shaking it, you would tear your charming little hands against its rough bark. And then you would say, reclining your head to one side in that adorable manner which belongs only to you and the flowers: ‘Oh how I wish I had this plum upon the ground !’ and then you would get angry.”

“That is all very natural, duke.”

“I shall certainly not be the person to contradict you.”

“Go on, my dear duke; your apostrophe is exceedingly interesting.”

“All at once, when turning your little head from side to side, you perceive your friend, the Duke de Richelieu, who is walking behind you, thinking.”

“Of what?”

“What a question! *Pardieu!* of you; and you say to him with your heavenly voice: ‘Oh, duke, duke!’”

“Well?”

“‘ You are a man; you are strong; you took Mahon; shake this devil of a plum-tree for me, that I may pluck this provoking plum !’ Is not that it, countess?”

“Exactly, duke; I repeated that to myself while you were saying it aloud. But what did you reply?”

“Reply? Oh! I replied: ‘ How you run on, countess! Certainly nothing could give me greater pleasure; but only look how firm the tree is, how knotty the branches. I have a sort of affection for my hands as well as you, though they are fifty years older than yours.’”

“Ah!” said the countess, suddenly, “yes, yes; I comprehend.”

“Then finish the apostrophe. What did you say to me?”

“I said, ‘ My little marshal, do not look with indifferent eyes upon this plum, which you look at indifferently only because it is not for you. Wish for it along with me, my dear marshal; covet it along with me; and if you shake

the tree properly, if the plum falls, then we will eat it together."

"Bravo!" exclaimed the duke, clapping his hands.

"Is that it?"

"Faith, countess, there is no one like you for finishing an apology. By mine honour, as my deceased father used to say, it is right well tricked out."

"You will shake the tree, duke?"

"With two hands and three hearts, countess."

"And the plum was really a Queen Claude?"

"I am not quite sure of that, countess."

"What was it, then?"

"Do you know it seemed much more like a portfolio dangling from the tree."

"Then we will divide the portfolio."

"Oh no! for me alone. Do not envy me the morocco, countess. There will fall so many beautiful things from the tree along with the portfolio when I shake it, that you will not know how to choose."

"Then, marshal, it is a settled affair?"

"I am to have Monsieur de Choiseul's place?"

"If the king consents."

"Does not the king do all you wish?"

"You see plainly he does not, since he will not send this Choiseul away."

"Oh! I trust the king will gladly recall his old companion."

"And you ask nothing for the Duke d'Aiguillon?"

"No, faith. The rascal can ask for himself."

"Besides, you will be there. And now it is my turn to ask."

"That is but just."

"What will you give me?"

"Whatever you wish."

"I want everything."

"That is reasonable."

"And shall I have it?"

"What a question! But will you be satisfied, at least, and ask me for nothing farther?"

"Except the merest trifle. You know Monsieur de Taverney?"

"He is a friend of forty years' standing."

"He has a son?"

"And a daughter. Well?"

"That is all."

"How! all?"

"Yes; the other demand I have to make shall be made in proper time and place. In the mean time, we understand each other, duke?"

"Yes, countess."

"Our compact is signed."

"Nay, more — it is sworn."

"Then shake the tree for me."

"Oh, rest satisfied; I have the means."

"What are they?"

"My nephew."

"What else?"

"The Jesuits."

"Oh! ho!"

"I have a very nice little plan cut and dry."

"May I know it?"

"Alas! countess — "

"Well, you are right."

"You know, secrecy — "

"Is half the battle. I complete your thought for you."

"You are charming."

"But I wish to shake the tree also."

"Oh, very well; shake away, countess; it can do no harm."

"But when will you begin to undermine, duke?" asked the countess.

"To-morrow. And when do you commence to shake?"

A loud noise of carriages was heard in the court-yard, and almost immediately cries of "Long live the king!" rose on the air.

“I?” said the countess, glancing at the window, “I shall commence directly.”

“Bravo!”

“Retire by the little staircase, duke, and wait in the court-yard. You shall have my answer in an hour.”

CHAPTER LXXVII.

THE MAKE-SHIFT OF HIS MAJESTY LOUIS XV.

Louis XV. was not so easy tempered that one could talk politics with him every day ; for in truth politics were his aversion, and when he was in a bad temper he always escaped from them with this argument, which admitted of no reply :

“ Bah ! the machine will last out my time.”

When circumstances were favourable, it was necessary to take advantage of them ; but it rarely happened that the king did not regain the advantage which a moment of good humour had caused him to lose.

Madame Dubarry knew her king so well that, like fishermen well skilled in the dangers of the sea, she never attempted to start in bad weather.

Now the present visit of his Majesty to Luciennes was one of the best opportunities possible. The king had done wrong the previous day, and knew beforehand that he should receive a scolding ; he would therefore be an easy prey.

But however confiding the game which the hunter lies in wait for in his lurking-place, it has always a certain instinct which must be taken into account. But this instinct is set at nought if the sportsman knows how to manage it.

The countess managed the royal game she had in view and which she wished to capture, in the following manner :

We have said that she was in a most becoming morning-dress, like those in which Boucher represents his shepherd-

esses. Only she had no rouge on, for Louis XV. had a perfect antipathy to rouge.

The moment his Majesty was announced, the countess seized her pot of rouge and began to rub her cheeks with it vigorously.

The king saw what the countess was doing from the ante-room.

“Fie!” said he, as he entered, “how she daubs herself!”

“Ah! good-day, sire,” said the countess, without interrupting her occupations even when the king kissed her on the neck.

“You did not expect me, it seems, countess?” asked the king.

“Why do you think so, sire?”

“Because you soil your face in that manner.”

“On the contrary, sire, I was certain that I should have the honour of receiving your Majesty in the course of the day.”

“How you say that, countess!”

“Indeed!”

“Yes, you are as serious as Monsieur Rousseau when he is listening to his own music.”

“That is because I have serious things to say to your Majesty.”

“Oh! I see what is coming, countess — reproaches.”

“Really!”

“Yes, reproaches.”

“I reproach you, sire? — and why, pray?”

“Because I did not come yesterday.”

“Oh, sire, do me the justice not to imagine that I pretend to monopolise your Majesty.”

“My little Jeanne, you are getting angry.”

“Oh! no, sire, I am angry already.”

“But hear me, countess; I assure you I never ceased thinking of you the whole time.”

“Pshaw!”

“And the evening seemed interminable to me.”

“But, once more, sire, I was not speaking of that at all. Your Majesty may spend your evenings where you please, without consulting any one.”

“Quite a family party, madame; only my own family.”

“Sire, I did not even inquire.”

“Why not?”

“*Dame!* you know it would be very unbecoming for me to do so.”

“Well,” said the king, “if that is not what you are displeased with me for, what is it, then? We must be just in this world.”

“I have no complaint to make against you, sire.”

“But since you are angry—”

“Yes, I am angry, sire; that is true, but it is at being made a make-shift.”

“You a make-shift? Good heavens!”

“Yes, I! The Countess Dubarry! The beautiful Jeanne, the charming Jeannette, the fascinating Jeanneton, as your Majesty calls me; I am a make-shift.”

“But how?”

“Because I have my king my lover, only when Madame de Choiseul and Madame de Grammont do not want him.”

“Oh! oh! countess—”

“Oh, I give you my honour, sire, I say what I think. Hold, sire, they tell me that Madame de Grammont often has watched for you at the entrance of your bedchamber. I shall do the reverse of this noble duchess. I will watch at the exit, and the first Choiseul or the first Grammont who shall fall under my hand—so much the worse, my faith.”

“Countess, countess!”

“But what can you expect from me? I am an uneducated woman. I am the mistress of Blaise, the beautiful Bourbonnaise, you know.”

“Countess, the Choiseuls will be revenged.”

“What matter, if they revenge themselves with my vengeance?”

“They will despise us.”

“ You are right. Well, I have an excellent plan which I shall carry into execution at once.”

“ And that is ? ” asked the anxious king.

“ Simply to go at once.”

The king shrugged his shoulders.

“ Ah ! you do not believe me, sire ? ”

“ No, indeed ! ”

“ That is because you do not take the trouble to reason — you confound me with others.”

“ How so ? ”

“ Madame de Chateauroux wanted to be a goddess, Madame de Pompadour aimed at being a queen. Others wished to be rich, powerful, or to humiliate the ladies of the court by the weight of their favours. I have none of these defects.”

“ That is true.”

“ But yet I have many good qualities.”

“ That is also true.”

“ Mere words, of course.”

“ Oh, countess ! no one knows your worth better than I do.”

“ Well, but listen. What I am going to say will not alter your conviction.”

“ Speak.”

“ In the first place, I am rich, and independent of every one.”

“ Do you wish to make me regret that, countess ? ”

“ Then I have not the least ambition for all that flatters these ladies, the least desire for what they aim at; my only wish is to love sincerely him whom I have chosen, whether he be a soldier or a king. When I love him no longer, I care for nothing else.”

“ Let me trust you care a little for me yet, countess.”

“ I have not finished, sire.”

“ Proceed, madame.”

“ I am pretty, I am young, and may reasonably hope for ten years more of beauty ; and the moment I cease to be

your Majesty's favourite, I shall be the happiest and most honoured woman in the world. You smile, sire—I am sorry to tell you it is because you do not reflect. When you had had enough, and your people too much, of your other favourites, you sent them away, and your people blessed you and execrated the disgraced favourite more than ever; but I shall not wait until I am sent away. I shall leave the place, and make it known publicly that I have left it. I shall give a hundred thousand francs to the poor, I shall retire to a convent for a week, and in less than a month my portrait will be hung up in all the churches as that of a repentant Magdalene."

"Oh! countess, you do not speak seriously?" said the king.

"Look at me, sire, and see if I am serious or not. I swear to you that I never was more serious in my life."

"Then you will commit this folly, Jeanne? But do you not see that by so doing you place yourself at the mercy of my whim, my lady the countess?"

"No, sire; to do so would be to say, 'choose between this and that,' whereas I say, 'adieu, sire!'—nothing more."

The king turned pale, but this time with anger.

"If you forget yourself so far, madame, take care."

"Of what, sire?"

"I shall send you to the Bastille, and you will find the Bastille rather more tiresome than a convent."

"Oh! sire," said the countess, clasping her hands, "if you would but do me that favour it would delight me!"

"Delight you? How so?"

"Yes, indeed. My secret ambition has always been to be popular, like Monsieur de la Chalotais, or Monsieur de Voltaire. I only want the Bastille for that. A little of the Bastille, and I shall be the happiest of women. I can then write memoirs of myself, of your ministers, of your daughters, of yourself, and transmit the virtues of Louis the Well-Beloved to the remotest posterity. Give me the

lettre-de-cachet, sire. Here, I will provide the pen and ink."

And she pushed a pen and an inkstand which were upon the work-table towards the king.

The king, thus braved, reflected a moment; then, rising:

"Very well, madame," said he. "Adieu."

"My horses!" cried the countess. "Adieu, sire."

The king made a step towards the door.

"Chon!" said the countess.

Chon entered.

"My trunks, my travelling equipage, and post-horses," said she; "quick! lose no time!"

"Post-horses!" said Chon, startled. "Good heavens! what is the matter?"

"We must leave this as quickly as possible, my dear, else the king will send us to the Bastille. There is no time to be lost. Make haste, Chon, make haste."

This reproach stung Louis to the heart. He approached the countess and took her hand.

"Forgive my warmth, countess," said he.

"In truth, sire, I am surprised you did not threaten me with the gibbet."

"Oh! countess!"

"Of course. Thieves are always hung."

"Thieves?"

"Yes; do I not steal the Countess de Grammont's place?"

"Countess!"

"Dame! that is my crime, sire."

"Be just, countess; you irritated me."

"And how?"

The king took her hands.

"We were both wrong. Let us forgive each other."

"Are you serious in your wish for a reconciliation, sire?"

"On my honour."

"Go, Chon."

“Without ordering anything?” asked Chon.

“No; order what I told you.”

“Countess!”

“But let them wait for fresh orders.”

“Ah!”

Chon left the room.

“Then you wish me to remain?” said the countess.

“Above all things.”

“Reflect on what you say, sire.”

The king reflected, but he could not retract; besides, he wanted to see how far the requirements of the victor would go.

“Speak,” said he.

“Immediately. Mark, sire! I go without asking anything.”

“I observed it.”

“But if I remain, I shall ask for something.”

“Well, what is it? I merely ask for information.”

“Ah! you know very well.”

“No.”

“Yes, for you make a grimace.”

“Monsieur de Choiseul’s dismissal, is it?”

“Exactly.”

“It is impossible, countess.”

“My horses, then.”

“But, ill-natured creature that you are—”

“Sign my *lettre-de-cachet* for the Bastille, or the letter which dismisses the minister.”

“There is an alternative,” said the king.

“Thanks for your clemency, sire; it seems I shall be permitted to go without being arrested.”

“Countess, you are a woman.”

“Fortunately I am.”

“And you talk politics like an angry rebellious woman. I have no grounds for dismissing Monsieur de Choiseul.”

“I understand he is the idol of the parliament; he encourages them in their revolt.”

“But there must be some pretext.”

“A pretext is the reason of the weak.”

“Countess, Monsieur de Choiseul is an honest man, and honest men are rare.”

“Honest! he sells you to the gentlemen of the black robe, who swallow up all the gold in the kingdom.”

“No exaggeration, countess.”

“Half, then.”

“Good heavens!” cried Louis XV.

“But I am talking folly. What are parliaments, Choiseuls, governments to me? What is the king to me, when I am only his make-shift?”

“Once more that word!”

“Always.”

“Give me two hours to consider, countess.”

“Ten minutes, sire. I will retire into my apartment; slip your answer under the door—there are pen, ink, and paper. If in ten minutes you have not replied, and replied as I wish, adieu. Think no more of me—I shall be gone. If not—”

“If not?”

“Then you have once more your Jeanne.”

Louis XV. kissed the hands of the countess, who, like the Parthian, threw back her most fascinating smile on him as she left the room.

The king made no opposition, and the countess entered the next apartment.

Five minutes afterwards a folded paper grazed the silken mat and the rich carpet beneath the door.

The countess eagerly devoured the contents of the letter, hastily wrote some words with a pencil on a scrap of paper, and, opening the window, threw the paper to Monsieur de Richelieu, who was walking in the little court-yard under an awning, in great trepidation lest he should be seen, and therefore keeping himself out of view as much as possible.

The marshal unfolded the paper, read it, and, in spite of

his five-and-sixty years, hastily ran to the large court-yard, and jumped into his carriage.

“Coachman,” said he, “to Versailles, as quick as possible!”

The paper which was thrown to Monsieur de Richelieu from the window merely contained these words: “I have shaken the tree — the portfolio has fallen!”

CHAPTER LXXVIII.

HOW KING LOUIS XV. TRANSACTED BUSINESS.

THE next day there was a great commotion at Versailles. Whenever two courtiers met there, there was nothing but mysterious signs and significant shakes of the hand, or else folded arms, and looks upwards, expressive of their grief and surprise.

Monsieur de Richelieu, with a number of his partisans, was in the king's ante-chamber at Trianon, about ten o'clock.

The Count Jean, all bedizened with lace and perfectly dazzling, conversed with the old marshal, and conversed gaily, if his joyous face could be taken as testimony of the fact.

About eleven o'clock the king passed quickly through the gallery, and entered the council-chamber without speaking to any one.

At about five minutes past eleven, Monsieur de Choiseul alighted from his carriage and crossed the gallery with his portfolio under his arm.

As he passed through the throng, there was a hurried movement amongst the courtiers, who all turned round as if talking among themselves, in order to avoid bowing to the minister.

The duke paid no attention to this manœuvre ; he entered the closet where the king was turning over some papers while sipping his chocolate.

“ Good morning, duke,” said the king familiarly ; “ are we charmingly this morning ? ”

“Sire, Monsieur de Choiseul is quite well, but the minister is very ill, and comes to request that your Majesty, since you have not yet spoken, will accept his resignation. I thank the king for permitting me to take the initiative in this matter; it is a last favour, for which I am deeply grateful.”

“How, duke? Your resignation? what does all that mean?”

“Sire, your Majesty yesterday signed for Madame Dubarry an order which deposes me. This news is already spread all over Paris and Versailles. The evil is done; nevertheless, I was unwilling to leave your Majesty’s service without receiving a formal order with the permission. For, nominated officially, I can consider myself dismissed only by an official act.”

“What! duke,” exclaimed the king, laughing, for the severe and lofty attitude of Monsieur de Choiseul made him almost tremble, “did you, a man of genius and skilled in official forms, did you believe that?”

“But, sire,” said the surprised minister, “you have signed.”

“What?”

“A letter, in the possession of Madame Dubarry.”

“Ah! duke, have you never felt the want of peace? You are most fortunate! Madame de Choiseul must indeed be a model.”

The duke, offended by the comparison, frowned.

“Your Majesty,” said he, “has too much firmness of character, and above all, too much tact and discretion, to mix up affairs of state with what you deign to call household matters.”

“Choiseul, I must tell you how that affair happened; it is very amusing. You are aware that you are very much feared in that quarter.”

“Rather say hated, sire.”

“Hated if you will. Well! this madcap countess left me no alternative but to send her to the Bastille, or to thank you for your services.”

“Well, sire ?”

“Well, duke, you must confess that it would have been a pity to lose the sight which Versailles presents this morning. I have been amused since yesterday with seeing the couriers depart in all directions, and watching the faces brighten up or lengthen. Since yesterday Cotillon III. is queen of France. It is exceedingly amusing.”

“But the end of all this, sire ?”

“The end, my dear duke,” said the king, seriously; “the end will always remain the same. You know me; I always seem to yield, but I never yield in reality. Let the women swallow the honoured morsel I throw them now and then, as to another Cerberus; but let us live quietly, uninterrupted, always together. And since we are on the chapter of explanations, keep this one for yourself. Whatever report you may hear, whatever letter you may receive from me, do not absent yourself from Versailles. As long as I continue to say to you what I now do, duke, we shall be good friends.”

The king extended his hand to his minister, who bowed over it, without gratitude and without anger.

“And now, my dear duke, let us to business.”

“At your Majesty’s pleasure,” replied the minister, opening his portfolio.

“Well, tell me something of these fireworks to begin with.”

“Ah, that was a great disaster, sire.”

“Whose fault was it ?”

“Monsieur Bignon’s, the provost of the merchants.”

“Did the people cry out very much ?”

“Oh! very much.”

“Then, perhaps we had better dismiss this Monsieur Bignon.”

“One of the members of parliament was nearly killed in the mêlée, and his colleagues therefore took the matter up warmly. But the advocate-general, Seguier, made a very eloquent speech to prove that this misfortune was the work

of fate alone. His speech was applauded, and so the affair is over for the present."

"So much the better! Let us pass to the parliament, duke. Ah! we are reproached for that."

"I am blamed, sire, for not supporting Monsieur d'Aiguillon against Mousieur de la Chalotais. But who blames me? The very people who carried your Majesty's letter about with all the demonstrations of joy. Remember, sire, that Monsieur d'Aiguillon overstepped the bounds of his authority in Brittany, that the Jesuits were really exiled, and that Monsieur de la Chalotais was right. Your Majesty has publicly acknowledged the innocence of the attorney-general. The king cannot thus be made to stultify himself. To his minister that is nothing, but in presence of his people—!"

"In the meantime the parliament feels itself strong."

"And it is strong. How can it be otherwise? The members are reprimanded, imprisoned, persecuted, and then declared innocent! I do not accuse Monsieur d'Aiguillon of having commenced this affair of La Chalotais, but I can never forgive him for having been in the wrong in it."

"Oh! come, duke, the evil is done, think of the remedy. How can we bridle these insolent minions?"

"Let the intrigues of the chancellor cease—let Monsieur d'Aiguillon have no more support, and the anger of the parliament will at once subside."

"But that would be to yield, duke."

"Then your Majesty is represented by Monsieur d'Aiguillon, and not by me?"

This was a home thrust, and the king felt it.

"You know," said he, "I do not like to affront my servants, even when they have been in the wrong. But no more of this unfortunate business; time will decide who is right. Let us speak of foreign affairs. I am told we shall have a war?"

"Sire, if there be war, it will be a just and necessary war."

"With the English?"

“Does your Majesty fear the English ?”

“Oh! upon the sea.”

“Your Majesty may rest tranquil. My cousin the Duke de Praslin, your minister of marine, will tell you that he has sixty-four men-of-war, not including those which are on the stocks. Besides, there are materials sufficient to construct twelve more in a year. Then there are fifty first-rate frigates — a respectable force with which to meet a naval war. For a continental war we have more than all that, we have the remembrance of Fontenoy.”

“Very well ; but why must I fight the English, my dear duke ? A much less skilful minister than you, the Abbé Dubois, always avoided a war with England.”

“I dare say, sire. The Abbé Dubois received six hundred thousand francs per month from the English.”

“Oh, duke !”

“I have the proof, sire.”

“Well, be it so. But where are the grounds for war ?”

“England covets all the Indies ; I have been obliged to give the most stringent and hostile orders to your officers there. The first collision will call forth demands for redress from England ; my official advice is that we do not listen to them. Your Majesty’s government must make itself respected by force, as it used to do by corruption.”

“Oh, let us pocket the affront. Who will know what happens in India ? It is so far from here !”

The duke bit his lips.

“There is a *casus belli* nearer home, sire,” said he.

“Another ? What is that ?”

“The Spaniards claim the Malouine and Falkland islands. The port of Egmont was arbitrarily occupied by the English ; the Spaniards drove them from it by main force. The English are enraged ; they threaten the Spaniards with instant war if they do not give them satisfaction.”

“Well ! but if the Spaniards are in the wrong, let them unravel the knot themselves.”

“And the family compact, sire ? Why did you insist on

the signing of this compact, which allies so closely all the Bourbons in Europe against English encroachment?"

The king hung his head.

"Do not be uneasy, sire," continued Choiseul; "you have a formidable army, an imposing fleet, and sufficient money. I can raise enough without making the people cry out. If we have a war, it will be an additional glory to your Majesty's reign, and it will furnish the pretext and excuse for several aggrandisements which I have in project."

"But in that case, duke, we must have peace in the interior; let there not be war everywhere."

"But the interior is quiet, sire," replied the duke, affecting not to understand.

"No, no; you see plainly it is not. You love me and serve me well. Others say they love me, and their conduct does not at all resemble yours. Let there be concord between all shades of opinion; let me live happily, my dear duke."

"It is not my fault, sire, if your happiness is not complete."

"That is the way to speak. Well! come, then, and dine with me to-day."

"At Versailles, sire?"

"No; at Luciennes."

"I regret exceedingly, sire, that I cannot, but my family is in great alarm on account of the reports which were spread yesterday. They think I am in disgrace with your Majesty, and I cannot let so many loving hearts suffer."

"And do those of whom I speak not suffer, duke? Remember how happily we three used to live together in the time of the poor marchioness."

The duke drooped his head, his eyes dimmed, and he uttered a half-suppressed sigh.

"Madame de Pompadour was extremely jealous of your Majesty's glory, and had lofty political ideas, sire. I confess that her character sympathised strongly with my own. I often emulated and strove along with her in the

great enterprises she undertook; yes, we understood each other."

"But she meddled with politics, duke, and every one blamed her for it."

"True!"

"The present one, on the contrary, is mild as a lamb; she has never yet asked me for a single *lettre-de-cachet*, even against the pamphleteers and sonnet writers. Well, they reproach her as if she followed in the other's footsteps. Oh, duke, it is enough to disgust one with progress! Come, will you make your peace at Luciennes?"

"Sire, deign to assure the Countess Dubarry that I esteem her as a charming woman, and well worthy of the king's love, but—"

"Ah! a but, duke—"

"But," continued Monsieur de Choiseul, "that my conviction is, that if your Majesty is necessary for the welfare of France, a good minister is of more importance to your Majesty in the present juncture than a charming mistress."

"Let us speak no more of it, duke, and let us remain good friends. But calm Madame de Grammont, and let her not lay any more plots against the countess; the women will embroil us."

"Madame de Grammont, sire, is too anxious to please your Majesty; that is her failing."

"But she displeases me by annoying the countess, duke."

"Well, Madame de Grammont is going, sire; we shall see her no more. That will be an enemy the less."

"I did not mean that; you go too far. But my head burns, duke; we have worked this morning like Louis XIV. and Colbert—quite in the style of the *Grand Siècle*, as the philosophers say. *A propos*, duke, are you a philosopher?"

"I am your Majesty's humble servant," replied Monsieur de Choiseul.

"You charm me; you are an invaluable man. Give me your arm, I am quite giddy."

The duke hastened to offer his arm to his Majesty.

He guessed that the folding-doors would be thrown open, that the whole court was in the gallery, and that he should be seen in this triumphant position. After having suffered so much, he was not sorry to make his enemies suffer in their turn.

The usher, in fact, now opened the doors, and announced the king in the gallery.

Louis XV. crossed the gallery, leaning heavily on Monsieur de Choiseul's arm, talking and smiling, without remarking, or seeming to remark, how pale Jean Dubarry was and how red Monsieur de Richelieu.

But Monsieur de Choiseul saw these shades of expression very well. With elastic step, lofty head, and sparkling eyes, he passed before the courtiers, who now approached as eagerly as they had before kept away.

"There," said the king, at the end of the gallery, "wait for me, I will take you with me to Trianon. Remember what I have told you."

"I have treasured it up in my heart," replied the minister, well knowing what a sting this cutting sentence would inflict on his enemies.

The king once more entered his apartments.

Monsieur de Richelieu broke the file, and hastened to press the minister's hand between his meagre fingers, exclaiming: "It is long since I knew that a Choiseul bears a charmed life."

"Thank you," said the duke, who knew how the land lay.

"But this absurd report?" continued the marshal.

"The report made his Majesty laugh very heartily," said Choiseul.

"I heard something of a letter—"

"A little mystification of the king's," replied the minister, glancing, while he spoke, at Jean, who lost countenance.

"Wonderful! wonderful!" repeated the marshal, turning to the viscount as soon as the Duke de Choiseul was out of sight.

The king ascended the staircase, calling the duke, who eagerly followed him.

“We have been played upon,” said the marshal to Jean.

“Where are they going?”

“To the Little Trianon, to amuse themselves at our expense.”

“Hell and furies!” exclaimed Jean. — “Ah! excuse me, marshal.”

“It is now my turn,” said the latter. “We shall see if my plans are more successful than those of the countess.”

CHAPTER LXXIX.

THE LITTLE TRIANON.

WHEN Louis XIV. had built Versailles, and had felt the inconvenience of grandeur, when he saw the immense salons full of guards, the ante-rooms thronged with courtiers, the corridors and entresols crowded with footmen, pages, and officers, he said to himself that Versailles was indeed what Louis XIV. had planned, and what Mansard, Le Brun, and Le Nôtre had executed — the dwelling of a deity, but not of a man. Then the Grand Monarque, who deigned to be a man in his leisure moments, built Trianon, that he might breathe more freely, and enjoy a little retirement. But the sword of Achilles, which had fatigued even Achilles himself, was an insupportable burden to his puny successor.

Trianon, the miniature of Versailles, seemed yet too pompous to Louis XV., who caused the Little Trianon, a pavilion of sixty feet square, to be built by the architect Gabriel.

To the left of this building was erected an oblong square, without character and without ornament; this was the dwelling of the servants and officers of the household. It contained about ten lodgings for masters, and had accommodation for fifty servants. This building still remains entire, and is composed of a ground-floor, a first story, and attics. This ground-floor is protected by a paved moat, which separates it from the planting; and all the windows in it, as well as those of the first floor, are grated. On the side next Trianon the windows are those of a long corridor, like that of a convent.

Eight or nine doors opening from the corridor gave admittance to the different suites of apartments, each consisting of an ante-room and two closets, one to the left, the other to the right, and of one, and sometimes two, underground apartments, looking upon the inner court of the building. The upper story contains the kitchens and the attics, the chambers of the domestics. Such is the Little Trianon.

Add to this a chapel about a hundred yards from the château, which we shall not describe, because there is no necessity for our doing so, and because it is too small to deserve our notice.

The topography of the establishment is, therefore, as follows: a château looking with its large eyes upon the park and wood in front; and, on the left, looking towards the offices, which present to its gaze only the barred windows of the corridors and the thickly trellised ones of the kitchens above.

The path leading from the Great Trianon, the established residence of Louis XIV., to the little, was through a kitchen garden which connected the two residences by means of a wooden bridge.

It was through this kitchen and fruit garden, which La Quintinie had designed and planted, that Louis XV. conducted Monsieur de Choiseul to the Little Trianon after the laborious council we have just mentioned. He wished to show him the improvements he had made in the new abode of the dauphin and dauphiness.

Monsieur de Choiseul admired everything, and commented upon everything, with the sagacity of a courtier. He listened while the king told him that the Little Trianon became every day more beautiful, more charming to live in, and the minister added that it would serve as his Majesty's private residence.

"The dauphiness," said the king, "is rather timid yet, like all young Germans; she speaks French well, but she is afraid of a slight accent, which to French ears betrays

the Austrian. At Trianon she will see only friends, and will speak only when she wishes. The result will be that she will speak well."

"I have already had the honour to remark," said Monsieur de Choiseul, "that her royal highness is accomplished, and requires nothing to make her perfect."

On the way, the two travellers found the dauphin standing motionless upon a lawn, measuring the sun's altitude.

Monsieur de Choiseul bent low, but as the dauphin did not speak to him, he did not speak either.

The king said, loud enough to be heard by his grandson:

"Louis is a finished scholar, but he is wrong thus to run his head against the sciences; his wife will have reason to complain of such conduct."

"By no means, sire," replied a low, soft voice issuing from a thicket.

And the king saw the dauphiness running towards him. She had been talking to a man furnished with papers, compasses, and chalks.

"Sire," said the princess, "Monsieur Mique, my architect."

"Ah!" exclaimed the king, "then you too are bitten by that mania, madame?"

"Sire, it runs in the family."

"You are going to build?"

"I am going to improve this great park, in which every one gets wearied."

"Oh! oh! my dear daughter, you speak too loud; the dauphin might hear you."

"It is a matter agreed upon between us, my father," replied the princess.

"To be wearied?"

"No; but to try to amuse ourselves."

"And so your highness is going to build?" asked Monsieur de Choiseul.

"I intend making a garden of this park, my lord duke."

"Ah! poor Le Nôtre!" said the king.

"Le Nôtre was a great man, sire, for what was in vogue then, but for what I love—"

"What do you love, madame?"

"Nature."

"Ah! like the philosophers."

"Or like the English."

"Good! Say that before Choiseul, and you will have a declaration of war immediately. He will let loose upon you the sixty-four ships and forty frigates of his cousin, Monsieur de Praslin."

"Sire," said the dauphiness, "I am going to have a natural garden laid out here by Monsieur Robert, who is the cleverest man in the world in that particular branch of horticulture."

"And what do you call a natural garden?" asked the king. "I thought that trees, and flowers, and even fruit, such as I gathered as I came along, were natural objects."

"Sire, you may walk a hundred years in your grounds, and you will see nothing but straight alleys, or thickets cut off at an angle of forty-five degrees, as the dauphin says, or pieces of water wedded to lawns, which in their turn are wedded to perspectives, parterres, or terraces."

"Well, that is ugly, is it?"

"It is not natural."

"There is a little girl who loves nature!" said the king, with a jovial rather than a joyous air. "Well, come; what will you make of my Trianon?"

"Rivers, cascades, bridges, grottoes, rocks, woods, ravines, houses, mountains, fields."

"For dolls?" said the king.

"Alas! sire, for kings such as we shall be," replied the princess, without remarking the blush which overspread her grandfather's face, and without perceiving that she foretold a sad truth for herself.

"Then you will destroy; but what will you build?"

"I shall preserve the present buildings."

"Ah! your people may consider themselves fortunate

that you do not intend to lodge them in these woods and rivers you speak of, like Hurons, Esquimaux, and Greenlanders. They would live a natural life there, and Monsieur Rousseau would call them children of nature. Do that, my child, and the encyclopedists will adore you."

"Sire, my servants would be too cold in such lodgings."

"Where will you lodge them, then, if you destroy all? Not in the palace; there is scarcely room for you two there."

"Sire, I shall keep the offices as they are."

And the dauphiness pointed to the windows of the corridor which we have described.

"What do I see there?" said the king, shading his eyes with his hand.

"A woman, sire," said Monsieur de Choiseul.

"A young lady whom I have taken into my household," replied the dauphiness.

"Mademoiselle de Taverney," said Choiseul, with his piercing glance.

"Ah!" said the king; "so you have the Taverneys here?"

"Only Mademoiselle de Taverney, sire."

"A charming girl! What do you make of her?"

"My reader."

"Very good," said the king, without taking his eye from the window through which Mademoiselle de Taverney, still pale from her illness, was looking very innocently, and without in the least suspecting that she was observed.

"How pale she is," said Monsieur de Choiseul.

"She was nearly killed on the 31st of May, my lord duke."

"Indeed? Poor girl!" said the king. "That Monsieur Bignon deserves to be disgraced."

"She is quite convalescent again," said Monsieur de Choiseul, hastily.

"Thanks to the goodness of Providence, my lord."

"Ah!" said the king, "she has fled."

"She has perhaps recognised your Majesty; she is very timid."

"Has she been with you long?"

"Since yesterday, sire; I sent for her when I installed myself here."

"What a melancholy abode for a young girl," said Louis. "That Gabriel was a clumsy rogue. He did not remember that the trees, as they grew, would conceal and darken this whole building."

"But I assure you, sire, that the apartments are very tolerable."

"That is impossible," said Louis XV.

"Will your Majesty deign to convince yourself?" said the dauphiness, anxious to do the honours of her palace.

"Very well. Will you come, Choiseul?"

"Sire, it is two o'clock I have a parliamentary meeting at half-past two. I have only time to return to Versailles."

"Well, duke, go; and give those black-gowns a shake for me. Dauphiness, show me these little apartments, if you please; I perfectly dote upon interiors."

"Come, Monsieur Mique," said the dauphiness to her architect, "you will have an opportunity of profiting by the opinion of his Majesty, who understands everything so well."

The king walked first, the dauphiness followed.

They mounted the little flight of steps which led to the chapel, avoiding the entrance of the court-yard, which was at one side. The door of the chapel is to the left; the staircase, narrow and unpretending, which leads to the corridor, on the right.

"Who lives here?" asked Louis XV.

"No one yet, sire."

"There is a key in the door of the first suite of apartments."

"Ah, yes, true. Mademoiselle de Taverney enters it to-day."

"Here?" said the king, pointing to the door.

“Yes, sire.”

“And is she there at present? If so, let us not enter.”

“Sire, she has just gone down; I saw her walking under the verandah of the court.”

“Then show me her apartments as a specimen.”

“As you please,” replied the dauphiness.

And she introduced the king into the principal apartment, which was preceded by an ante-room and two closets.

Some articles of furniture which were already arranged, several books, a pianoforte, and above all, an enormous bouquet of the most beautiful flowers, which Mademoiselle de Taverney had placed in a Chinese vase, attracted the king’s attention.

“Ah!” said he, “what beautiful flowers! And yet you wish to change the garden. Who supplies your people with such splendid flowers? Do they keep some for you?”

“It is in truth a beautiful bouquet.”

“The gardener takes good care of Mademoiselle de Taverney. Who is your gardener here?”

“I do not know, sire. Monsieur de Jussieu undertook to procure them for me.”

The king gave a curious glance around the apartments, looked again at the exterior, peeped into the court-yard, and went away. His Majesty crossed the park, and returned to the Great Trianon, where his equipages were already in waiting for a hunt which was to take place after dinner, in carriages, from three till six o’clock.

The dauphin was still measuring the sun’s altitude.

CHAPTER LXXX.

THE CONSPIRACY IS RENEWED.

WHILE the king, in order to reassure M. de Choiseul and not to lose any time himself, was walking in Trianon till the chase should commence, Luciennes was the centre of a reunion of frightened conspirators, who had flown swiftly to Madame Dubarry, like birds who have smelt the sportsman's powder.

Jean and Marshal Richelieu, after having looked at each other ill-humouredly for some time, were the first to take flight. The others were the usual herd of favorites, whom the certain disgrace of the Choiseuls had allured, whom his return to favour had alarmed, and who, no longer finding the minister there to fawn upon, had returned mechanically to Luciennes, to see if the tree was yet strong enough for them to cling to as before.

Madame Dubarry was taking a siesta after the fatigues of her diplomacy, and the deceptive triumph which had crowned it, when Richelieu's carriage rolled into the court with the noise and swiftness of a whirlwind.

“Mistress Dubarry is asleep,” said Zamore without moving.

Jean sent Zamore rolling on the carpet with a scientific kick, inflicted upon the most highly ornamented portion of his governor's uniform.

Zamore screamed, and Chon hastened to inquire the cause.

“You are beating that little fellow again, you brute!” said she.

"And I shall exterminate you, too," continued Jean, with kindling eyes, "if you do not immediately awaken the countess."

But there was no need to awaken the countess; at Zamore's cries, at the growling tones of Jean's voice, she had suspected some misfortune, and hastened into the room, wrapped in a dressing-gown.

"What is the matter?" exclaimed she, alarmed at seeing Jean stretched at full length upon the sofa to calm the agitation of his bile, and at finding that the marshal did not even kiss her hand.

"The matter! the matter!" said Jean. "Parbleu! what is always the matter—the Choiseuls!"

"How?"

"Yes; *mille tonnerres!* firmer than ever."

"What do you mean?"

"The Count Dubarry is right," continued Richelieu; "Monsieur the Duke de Choiseul is firmer than ever."

The countess drew the king's letter from her bosom.

"And this?" said she, smiling.

"Have you read it aright, countess?" asked the marshal.

"Why, I fancy I can read, duke," replied Madame Dubarry.

"I do not doubt it, madame. Will you allow me to read it also?"

"Oh, certainly; read."

The duke took the paper, unfolded it slowly, and read:

To-morrow I shall thank Monsieur de Choiseul for his services. I promise it positively.

LOUIS.

"Is that clear?" said the countess.

"Perfectly clear," replied the marshal, with a grimace.

"Well! what?" said Jean.

"Well! It is to-morrow that we shall be victorious, and nothing is lost as yet."

"How! To-morrow? The king signed that yesterday, therefore to-morrow is to-day."

"Pardon me, madame," said the duke; "as there is no date to the note, to-morrow will always be the day after you wish to see Monsieur de Choiseul dismissed. In the Rue de la Grange-Batalière, about one hundred paces from my house, there is a tavern, on the signboard of which is written in red characters, 'Credit given to-morrow.' To-morrow, — that is, never."

"The king mocks us!" said Jean, furiously.

"Impossible," said the alarmed countess; "impossible! Such a trick would be unworthy —"

"Ah, madame, his Majesty is so merry," said Richelieu.

"He shall pay for this, duke," said the countess, in a tone of anger.

"After all, countess, we must not be angry with the king; we cannot accuse his Majesty of cheating or tricking us, for the king has performed what he promised."

"Oh!" said Jean, with a more than vulgar shrug of his shoulders.

"What did he promise?" cried the countess. "To thank Choiseul for his services."

"And that is precisely what he has done, madame. I heard his Majesty myself thank the duke for his services. The word has two meanings; in diplomacy, each takes the one he prefers. You have chosen yours, the king has chosen his; therefore there is no more question of to-morrow. It is to-day, according to your opinion, that the king should have kept his promise, and he has done so. I who speak to you heard him thank Choiseul."

"Duke, this is no time for jesting, I think."

"Do you think I am jesting, countess? Ask Count Jean."

"No, by Heaven! We were in no humour for laughing this morning when Choiseul was embraced, flattered, feasted by the king; and even now he is walking arm in arm with him in Trianon."

“Arm in arm!” exclaimed Chon, who had slipped into the room, and who raised her snowy arms like a second Niobe in despair.

“Yes, I have been tricked,” said the countess; “but we shall see. Chon, countermand my carriage for the chase. I shall not go.”

“Good!” said Jean.

“One moment,” cried Richelieu. “No hurry, no pouting. Ah! forgive me, countess, for daring to advise you; I entreat you to pardon me.”

“Go on, duke; do not apologise. I think I am losing my senses. See how I am placed; I did not wish to meddle with politics, and the first time I touch upon them, self-love launches me so deeply. You were saying —”

“That pouting would not be wise now. The position is difficult, countess. If the king is so decidedly in favour of these Choiseuls, if the dauphiness has so much influence over him, if he thus openly breaks a lance with you, you must —”

“Well, what?”

“You must be even more amiable than you are at present, countess. I know it is impossible; but in a position like ours the impossible becomes necessary. Attempt the impossible, then.”

The countess reflected.

“For, in short,” said the duke, “if the king should adopt German manners —”

“If he should become virtuous!” exclaimed Jean, horrified.

“Who knows, countess?” said Richelieu; “novelty is such an attractive thing.”

“Oh! as for that,” replied the countess, with a nod of incredulity, “I do not believe it.”

“More extraordinary things have happened, countess. You know the proverb of the devil turning hermit. So you must not pout.”

“But I am suffocating with rage.”

“Parbleu! countess, I can believe you; but suffocate before us, breathe freely before the enemy. Do not let the king, that is to say, Monsieur de Choiseul, perceive your anger.”

“And shall I go to the chase?”

“It would be most politic.”

“And you, duke?”

“Oh, I? If I should have to crawl on all-fours, I shall go.”

“Come in my carriage, then!” cried the countess, to see what face her ally would put on.

“Oh, countess,” replied the duke, smirking to hide his vexation, “it is such an honour—”

“That you refuse?”

“I? Heaven forbid! But take care; you will compromise yourself.”

“He confesses it—he dares to confess it,” cried Madame Dubarry.

“Countess! countess! Monsieur de Choiseul will never forgive me.”

“Are you already on such good terms with Monsieur de Choiseul?”

“Countess, I shall get into disgrace with the dauphiness.”

“Would you rather we should each continue the war separately, without sharing the spoil? It is still time. You are not compromised, and you may yet withdraw from the association.”

“You misunderstand me, countess,” said the duke, kissing her hands. “Did I hesitate on the day of your presentation to send you a dress, a hair-dresser, and a carriage? Well, I shall not hesitate any more to-day. I am bolder than you imagine, countess.”

“Then it is agreed. We will go to this hunt together, and that will serve me as a pretext for not seeing or speaking to any one.”

“Not even to the king?”

“Oh! on the contrary, I shall give him such sweet words that he will be in despair.”

"Bravo! that is good tactics."

"But you, Jean, what are you doing there? Do endeavour to rise from those cushions; you are burying yourself alive, my good friend."

"You want to know what I am doing, do you? Well, I am thinking —"

"Of what?"

"I am thinking that all the ballad-writers of the town and the parliament are setting us to all possible tunes; that the 'Nouvelles à la main' is cutting us up like meat for pies; that the 'Gazetier Cuirassé' is piercing us for want of a cuirass; that the 'Journal des Observateurs' observes us even to the marrow of our bones; that, in short, to-morrow we shall be in so pitiable a state that even a Choiseul might pity us."

"And what is the result of your reflections?" asked the duke.

"Why, that I must hasten to Paris to buy a little lint, and no inconsiderable quantity of ointment to put upon our wounds. Give me some money, my little sister."

"How much?" asked the countess.

"A trifle; two or three hundred louis."

"You see, duke," said the countess, turning to Richelieu, "that I am already paying the expenses of the war."

"That is only the beginning of the campaign, and what you sow to-day, to-morrow you will reap."

The countess shrugged her shoulders slightly, rose, went to her chiffonière, and, opening it, took out a handful of banknotes, which, without counting them, she handed to Jean, who, also without counting them, pocketed them with a deep sigh.

Then rising, yawning, and stretching himself like a man overwhelmed with fatigue, he took a few steps across the room.

"See," said he, pointing to the duke and the countess, "these people are going to amuse themselves at the chase, while I have to gallop to Paris. They will see gay cava-

liars and lovely women, and I shall see nothing but hideous faces of scribbling drudges. Certainly, I am the turnspit of the establishment."

"Mark me, duke," said the countess, "he will never bestow a thought on us. Half my bank-notes will be squandered on some opera girl, and the rest will disappear in a gambling-house. That is his errand to Paris, and yet he bemoans himself, the wretch! Leave my sight, Jean, you disgust me."

Jean emptied three plates of bonbons, stuffed the contents into his pockets, stole a Chinese figure with diamond eyes from the landing, and stalked off with a most majestic strut, pursued by the exclamations of the countess.

"What a delightful youth!" said Richelieu, in the tone of a parasite who praises a spoiled brat, while all the time he is inwardly devoting him to the infernal regions; "he is very dear to you, I suppose, countess?"

"As you say, duke, he has fixed all his happiness in me, and the speculation brings him three or four hundred thousand francs a year."

The clock struck.

"Half-past twelve, countess," said the duke. "Luckily you are almost dressed. Show yourself a little to your courtiers, who might otherwise think there was an eclipse, and then let us to our carriages. You know how the chase is ordered?"

"His Majesty and I arranged it yesterday; they were to proceed to the forest of Marly and take me up in passing."

"Oh! I am very sure the king has not changed the programme."

"In the meantime, duke, let me hear your plan; it is your turn now."

"Madame, I wrote yesterday to my nephew, who, if I may believe my presentiments, is already on his way hither."

"Monsieur d'Aiguillon?"

"I should not be surprised if he crosses my letter on the

road, and if he were here to-morrow or the day after at the latest."

"Then you calculate upon him?"

"Oh! madame, he does not want for sense."

"No matter who it is, for we are at the last extremity. The king might perhaps submit, but he has such a dreadful antipathy to business."

"So that—"

"So that I fear he will never consent to give up Monsieur de Choiseul."

"Shall I speak frankly to you, countess?"

"Certainly."

"Well, I think so too. The king will find a hundred stratagems like that of yesterday. His Majesty has so much wit! And then, on your side, countess, you will never risk losing his love for the sake of an unaccountable whim."

And while he spoke the marshal fixed a searching glance on Madame Dubarry.

"Dame! I must reflect upon that."

"You see, countess, Monsieur de Choiseul is there for an eternity; nothing but a miracle can dislodge him."

"Yes, a miracle," repeated Jeanne.

"And unfortunately we are not now in the age of miracles."

"Oh!" said Madame Dubarry, "I know some one who can work miracles yet."

"You know a man who can work miracles, and yet you did not tell me so before?"

"I only thought of it this moment, duke."

"Do you think he could assist us in this affair?"

"I think he can do everything."

"Oh! indeed? And what miracle has he worked? Tell me, that I may judge of his skill by the specimen."

"Duke," said Madame Dubarry, approaching Richelieu, and involuntarily lowering her voice, "he is a man who, ten years ago, met me upon the Place Louis XV. and told me I should be Queen of France."

"Indeed! that is in truth miraculous; and could he tell me, think you, if I shall die prime minister?"

"Don't you think so?"

"Oh, I don't doubt it in the least. What is his name?"

"His name will tell you nothing."

"Where is he?"

"Ah! that I don't know."

"He did not give you his address?"

"No; he was to come to me for his recompense."

"What did you promise him?"

"Whatever he should ask."

"And he has not come?"

"No."

"Countess, that is even more miraculous than his prediction. We must certainly have this man."

"But how shall we proceed?"

"His name, countess — his name?"

"He has two."

"Proceed according to order — the first?"

"The Count de Fenix."

"What! the man you pointed out to me on the day of your presentation?"

"Yes; the Prussian officer."

"Oh! I have no longer any faith in him. All the sorcerers I have ever known had names ending in *i* or *o*."

"That exactly suits, duke; for his second name is Joseph Balsamo."

"But have you no means of finding him out?"

"I shall task my brain, duke. I think I know some one who knows him."

"Good! But make haste, countess. It is now a quarter to one."

"I am ready. My carriage, there!"

Ten minutes afterwards Madame Dubarry and Monsieur de Richelieu were seated side by side, and driving rapidly on their way to the hunting party.

CHAPTER LXXXI.

THE SORCERER CHASE.

A LONG train of carriages filled the avenues of the forest of Marly, where the king was hunting. It was what was called the afternoon chase.

In the latter part of his life, Louis XV. neither shot at nor rode after the game ; he was content with watching the progress of the chase.

Those of our readers who have read Plutarch, will perhaps remember that cook of Mark Antony's, who put a boar on the spit every hour, so that among the six or seven boars which were roasting, there might always be one ready whenever Mark Antony wished to dine.

The reason of this was that Mark Antony, as governor of Asia Minor, was overwhelmed with business ; he was the dispenser of justice, and as the Sicilians are great thieves (the fact is confirmed by Juvenal), Mark Antony had abundance of work on his hands. He had therefore always five or six roasts in various degrees of progress on the spit, waiting for the moment when his functions as judge would permit him to snatch a hasty morsel.

Louis XV. acted in a similar manner. For the afternoon chase there were three or four stags started at different hours, and accordingly as the king felt disposed he chose a nearer or more distant "view halloo."

On this day his Majesty had signified his intention of hunting until four o'clock. A stag was therefore chosen which had been started at twelve, and which might consequently be expected to run until that hour.

Madame Dubarry, on her side, intended to follow the king as faithfully as the king intended to follow the stag. But hunters propose and fate disposes. A combination of circumstances frustrated this happy project of Madame Dubarry's, and the countess found in fate an adversary almost as capricious as herself.

Whilst the countess, talking politics with Monsieur de Richelieu, drove rapidly after the king, who in his turn drove rapidly after the stag, and whilst the duke and she returned in part the bows which greeted them as they passed, they all at once perceived about fifty paces from the road, beneath a magnificent canopy of verdure, an unfortunate calèche revolving its wheels in the air, while the two black horses which should have drawn it were peaceably munching, the one the bark of a beech-tree, the other the moss growing at his feet.

Madame Dubarry's horses, a magnificent pair presented to her by the king, had outstripped all the other carriages, and were the first to arrive in sight of the broken carriage.

“Ha! an accident!” said the countess, calmly.

“Faith, yes!” said the Duke de Richelieu, with equal coolness, for sensibility is little in fashion at court; “the carriage is broken to pieces.”

“Is that a corpse upon the grass?” asked the countess.
“Look, duke.”

“I think not; it moves.”

“Is it a man or a woman?”

“I don't know. I cannot see well.”

“Ha! it bows to us.”

“Then it cannot be dead.”

And Richelieu at all hazards took off his hat.

“But, countess,” said he, “it seems to me —”

“And to me also —”

“That it is his Eminence Prince Louis.”

“The Cardinal de Rohan in person!”

“What the deuce is he doing there?” asked the duke.

“Let us go and see,” replied the countess. “Champagne, drive on to the broken carriage.”

The coachman immediately left the high-road and dashed in among the lofty trees.

“Faith, yes, it is monseigneur the cardinal,” said Richelieu.

It was in truth his Eminence, who was lying stretched upon the grass, waiting until some of his friends should pass.

Seeing Madame Dubarry approach, he rose.

“A thousand compliments to the countess!” said he.

“How, cardinal! is it you?”

“Myself, madame.”

“On foot?”

“No, sitting.”

“Are you wounded?”

“Not in the least.”

“And how in all the world do you happen to be in this position?”

“Do not speak of it, madame; that brute of a coachman, a wretch whom I sent for to England, when I told him to cut across the wood in order to join the chase, turned so suddenly that he upset me and broke my best carriage.”

“You must not complain, cardinal,” said the countess; “a French coachman would have broken your neck, or at least your ribs.”

“Very possibly.”

“Therefore, be consoled.”

“Oh! I am a little of a philosopher, countess; only I shall have to wait, and that is fatal.”

“How, prince! to wait? A Rohan wait?”

“There is no resource.”

“Oh, no! I would rather alight and leave you my carriage.”

“In truth, madame, your kindness makes me blush.”

“Come, jump in, prince; jump in.”

“No, thank you, madame, I am waiting for Soubise, who is at the chase, and who cannot fail to pass in a few moments.”

“But if he should have taken another road ?”

“Oh ! it is of no consequence.”

“Monseigneur, I entreat you will.”

“No, thank you.”

“But why not ?”

“I am unwilling to incommod you.”

“Cardinal, if you refuse to enter, I shall order one of the footmen to carry my train, and I shall roam through the woods like a Dryad.”

The cardinal smiled, and thinking that a longer resistance might be interpreted unfavourably by the countess, he consented to enter the carriage. The duke had already given up his place, and taken his seat upon the bench in front. The cardinal entreated him to resume his former position, but the duke was inflexible.

The countess’s splendid horses soon made up for the time which had thus been lost.

“Excuse me, monseigneur,” said the countess, addressing the cardinal, “has your Eminence been reconciled to the chase ?”

“How so ?”

“Because this is the first time I have had the pleasure of seeing you join in that amusement.”

“By no means, countess. I had come to Versailles to have the honour of paying my respects to his Majesty, when I was told he was at the chase. I had to speak to him on some important business, and therefore followed, hoping to overtake him ; but, thanks to this cursed coachman, I shall not only lose his Majesty’s ear, but also my assignation in town.”

“You see, madame,” said the duke, laughing, “monseigneur makes a free confession ! — he has an assignation.”

“In which I shall fail, I repeat,” replied the cardinal.

“Does a Rohan, a prince, a cardinal, ever fail in anything ?” said the countess.

“*Dame !*” said the prince, “unless a miracle comes to my assistance.”

The duke and the countess looked at each other; this word recalled their recent conversation.

"Faith! prince," said the countess, "speaking of miracles, I will confess frankly that I am very happy to meet a dignitary of the church, to know if he believes in them."

"In what, madame?"

"*Parbleu!* in miracles," said the duke.

"The Scriptures give them as an article of faith, madame," said the cardinal, trying to look devout.

"Oh! I do not mean those miracles," replied the countess.

"And of what other miracles do you speak, madame?"

"Of modern miracles."

"Those indeed, I confess, are rather more rare," said the cardinal. "But still—"

"But still, what?"

"Faith, I have seen things, which, if they were not miraculous, were at least very incredible."

"You have seen such things, prince?"

"On my honour."

"But you know, madame," said Richelieu, laughing, "that his Eminence is said to be in communication with spirits, which, perhaps, is not very orthodox."

"No, but which must be very convenient," said the countess. "And what have you seen, prince?"

"I have sworn not to reveal it."

"Oh! that begins to look serious."

"It is a fact, madame."

"But if you have promised to observe secrecy respecting the sorcery, perhaps you have not done so as regards the sorcerer?"

"No."

"Well, then, prinee, I must tell you that the duke and myself came out to-day with the intention of seeking some magician."

"Indeed?"

"Upon my honour."

"Take mine."

“ I desire no better.”

“ He is at your disposal, countess.”

“ And at mine also, prince ? ”

“ And at yours also, duke.”

“ What is his name ? ”

“ The Count de Fenix.”

The countess and the duke looked at each other and turned pale.

“ That is strange,” said they, both together.

“ Do you know him ? ” asked the prince.

“ No. And you think him a sorcerer ? ”

“ I am positive of it.”

“ You have spoken to him, then ? ”

“ Of course.”

“ And you found him — ”

“ Perfect.”

“ On what occasion, may I ask ? ”

The cardinal hesitated.

“ On the occasion of his foretelling my fortune.”

“ Correctly ? ”

“ He told me things of the other world.”

“ Has he no other name than the Count de Fenix ? ”

“ I think I have heard him called — ”

“ Speak, monseigneur,” said the countess, impatiently.

“ Joseph Balsamo, madame.”

“ Is the devil very black ? ” asked Madame Dubarry all at once.

“ The devil, countess ? I have not seen him.”

“ What are you thinking of, countess ? ” cried Richelieu.

“ *Pardieu !* that would be respectable company for a cardinal.”

“ And did he tell you your fortune without showing you the devil ? ”

“ Oh, certainly,” said the cardinal, “ they only show the devil to people of no consideration; we can dispense with him.”

“ But say what you will, prince,” continued Madame

Dubarry, "there must be a little devilry at the bottom of it."

"*Dame!* I think so."

"Blue fire, spectres, infernal caldrons which smell horribly while they burn, eh?"

"Oh, no! my sorcerer is most polite and well-bred; he is a very gallant man, and receives his visitors in good style."

"Will you not have your horoscope drawn by this man, countess?" said Richelieu.

"I long to do so, I confess."

"Do so, then, madame."

"But where is all this accomplished?" asked Madame Dubarry, hoping that the cardinal would give her the wished-for address.

"In a very handsome room, fashionably furnished."

The countess could scarcely conceal her impatience.

"Very well," said she; "but the house?"

"A very fine house, though in a singular style of architecture."

The countess stamped with rage at being so ill understood. Richelieu came to her assistance.

"But do you not see, monseigneur," said he, "that madame is dying to know where your sorcerer lives?"

"Where he lives, you say? Oh! well," replied the cardinal, "eh! faith — wait a moment — no — yes — no. It is in the Marais, near the corner of the boulevard, Rue St. François — St. Anastasie — no. However, it is the name of some saint."

"But what saint? You must surely know them all?"

"No, faith. I know very little about them," said the cardinal; "but stay — my fool of a footman must remember."

"Oh! very fortunately he got up behind," said the duke. Stop, Champagne, stop!"

And the duke pulled the cord which was attached to the coachman's little finger, who suddenly reined in the foaming horses, throwing them on their sinewy haunches.

"Olive," said the cardinal, "are you there, you scoundrel?"

"Yes, monseigneur."

"Where did I stop one evening in the Marais—a long time back?"

The lacquey had overheard the whole conversation, but took care not to appear as if he had done so.

"In the Marais?" said he, seeming to search his memory.

"Yes, near the boulevards."

"What day, monseigneur?"

"One day when I was returning from St. Denis. The carriage, I think, waited for me in the boulevards."

"Oh, yes, monseigneur," said Olive, "I remember now. A man came and threw a very heavy parcel into the carriage; I remember it perfectly."

"Very possibly," replied the cardinal, "but who asked you about that, you scoundrel?"

"What does your Eminence wish, then?"

"To know the name of the street."

"Rue St. Claude, monseigneur."

"Claude, that is it!" cried the cardinal. "I would have laid any wager it was the name of a saint."

"Rue St. Claude!" repeated the countess, darting such an expressive glance at Richelieu, that the marshal, fearing to let any one guess his secrets, above all, when it concerned a conspiracy, interrupted Madame Dubarry by these words:

"Ha! countess, the king!"

"Where?"

"Yonder."

"The king! the king!" exclaimed the countess. "To the left, Champagne, to the left, that his Majesty may not see us!"

"And why, countess?" asked the astonished cardinal. "I thought that, on the contrary, you were taking me to his Majesty."

"Oh, true, you wish to see the king, do you not?"

“I came for that alone, madame.”

“Very well; you shall be taken to the king —”

“But you?”

“Oh, we shall remain here.”

“But, countess —”

“No apologies, prince, I entreat; every one to his own business. The king is yonder, under those chestnut-trees; you have business with the king; very well, the affair is easily arranged. Champagne!”

Champagne pulled up.

“Champagne, let us alight here, and take his Eminence to the king.”

“What! alone, countess?”

“You wished to have an audience of his Majesty, cardinal?”

“It is true.”

“Well, you shall have his ear entirely to yourself.”

“Ah! this kindness absolutely overwhelms me.” And the prelate gallantly kissed Madame Dubarry’s hand.

“But where will you remain yourself, madame?” inquired he.

“Here, under these trees.”

“The king will be looking for you.”

“So much the better.”

“He will be uneasy at not seeing you.”

“And that will torment him — just what I wish.”

“Countess, you are positively adorable.”

“That is precisely what the king says when I have tormented him. Champagne, when you have taken his Eminence to the king, you will return at full gallop.

“Yes, my lady.”

“Adieu, duke,” said the cardinal.

“*Au revoir*, monseigneur,” replied the duke.

And the valet having let down the step, the duke alighted and handed out the countess, who leaped to the ground as lightly as a nun escaping from a convent, while the carriage rapidly bore his Eminence to the hillock from which his

most Christian Majesty was seeking, with his short-sighted eyes, the naughty countess whom every one had seen but himself.

Madame Dubarry lost no time. She took the duke's arm, and drawing him into the thicket,—

“Do you know,” said she, “that it must have been Providence who sent that dear cardinal to us, to put us on the trace of our man!”

“Then we are positively to go to him?”

“I think so; but—”

“What, countess?”

“I am afraid; I confess it.”

“Of whom?”

“Of the sorcerer. Oh, I am very credulous.”

“The deuce!”

“And you, do you believe in sorcerers?”

“*Dame!* I can't say no, countess.”

“My history of the prediction—”

“Is a startling fact. And I myself,” said the old marshal, scratching his ear, “once met a certain sorcerer.”

“Bah!”

“Who rendered me a very important service.”

“What service, duke?”

“He resuscitated me.”

“He resuscitated you!”

“Certainly; I was dead, no less.”

“Oh! tell me the whole affair, duke.”

“Let us conceal ourselves, then.”

“Duke, you are a dreadful coward.”

“Oh, no, I am only prudent.”

“Are we well placed here?”

“Yes, I think so.”

“Well! the story! the story!”

“Well, I was at Vienna—it was the time when I was ambassador there—when one evening, while I was standing under a lamp, I received a sword-thrust through my body. It was a husband's sword, and a very unwholesome

sort of thing it is, I assure you. I fell—I was taken up—I was dead."

"What? you were dead?"

"Yes, or close upon it. A sorcerer passes, who asks who is the man whom they are carrying. He is told it is I; he stops the litter, pours three drops of some unknown liquid into the wound, three more between my lips, and the bleeding stops, respiration returns, my eyes open, and I am cured."

"It is a miracle from heaven, duke."

"That is just what frightens me; for, on the contrary, I believe it is a miracle of the devil."

"True, marshal, Providence would not have saved a dissipated rake like you. Honour to whom honour is due. And does your sorcerer still live?"

"I doubt it, unless he has found the elixir of life."

"Like you, marshal?"

"Do you believe these stories, then?"

"I believe everything. He was old?"

"Methuselah in person."

"And his name?"

"Ah! a magnificent Greek name,—Althotas."

"What a terrible name, marshal!"

"Is it not, madame?"

"Duke, there is the carriage returning. Are we decided? Shall we go to Paris and visit the Rue St. Claude?"

"If you like. But the king is waiting for you."

"That would determine me, duke, if I had not already determined. He has tormented me. Now, France, it is your turn to suffer!"

"But he will think you are lost—carried off."

"And so much the more that I have been seen with you, marshal."

"Stay, countess, I will be frank with you; I am afraid."

"Of what?"

"I am afraid that you will tell all this to some one, and that I shall be laughed at."

"Then we shall both be laughed at together, since I go with you."

"That decides me, countess. However, if you betray me, I shall say —"

"What will you say ?"

"I shall say that you came with me tête-à-tête."

"No one will believe you, duke."

"Ah ! countess, if the king were not there !"

"Champagne ! Champagne ! Here, behind this thicket, that we may not be seen. Germain, the door. That will do. Now to Paris, Rue St. Claude, in the Marais, and let the pavement smoke for it."

CHAPTER LXXXII.

THE COURIER.

It was six o'clock in the evening. In that chamber in the Rue St. Claude into which we have already introduced our readers, Balsamo was seated beside Lorenza, now awake, and was endeavouring by persuasion to soften her rebellious spirit, which refused to listen to all his prayers.

But the young girl looked askance at him, as Dido looked at *Æneas* when he was about to leave her, spoke only to reproach him, and moved her hand only to repulse his.

She complained that she was a prisoner, a slave; that she could no longer breathe the fresh air, nor see the sun. She envied the fate of the poorest creatures, of the birds, of the flowers. She called Balsamo her tyrant.

Then, passing from reproaches to rage, she tore into shreds the rich stuffs which her husband had given her, in order by this semblance of gaiety and show to cheer the solitude he imposed on her.

Balsamo, on the other hand, spoke gently to her, and looked at her lovingly. It was evident that this weak, irritable creature filled an immense place in his heart, if not in his life.

“Lorenza,” said he to her, “my beloved, why do you display this spirit of resistance and hostility? Why will you not live with me, who love you inexpressibly, as a gentle and devoted companion? You would then have nothing to wish for; you would be free to bloom in the sun like the flowers of which you spoke just now; to stretch your wing like the birds whose fate you envy. We would go every-

where together. You would not only see the sun which delights you so much, but the factitious sun of splendour and fashion — those assemblies to which the women of this country resort. You would be happy according to your tastes, while rendering me happy in mine. Why will you refuse this happiness, Lorenza? — you who, with your beauty and riches, would make so many women envious?"

"Because I abhor you," said the haughty young girl.

Balsamo cast on Lorenza a glance expressive at once of anger and pity.

"Live, then, as you condemn yourself to live," said he; "and since you are so proud, do not complain."

"I should not complain, if you would leave me alone. I should not complain, if you did not force me to speak to you. Do not come into my presence, or when you do enter my prison, do not speak to me, and I shall do as the poor birds from the south do when they are imprisoned in cages — they die, but do not sing."

Balsamo made an effort to appear calm.

"Come, Lorenza," said he, "a little more gentleness and resignation. Look into a heart which loves you above all things. Do you wish for books?"

"No."

"Why not? Books would amuse you."

"I wish to weary myself until I die."

Balsamo smiled, or rather endeavoured to smile.

"You are mad," said he; "you know very well that you cannot die while I am here to take care of you, and to cure you when you fall ill."

"Oh!" cried Lorenza, "you will not cure me when you find me strangled with this scarf against the bars of my window."

Balsamo shuddered.

"Or when," continued she, furiously, "I have opened this knife and stabbed myself to the heart."

Balsamo, pale as death, and bathed in cold perspiration, gazed at Lorenza, and with a threatening voice:

"No, Lorenza," said he, "you are right; I shall not cure you then, I shall bring you back to life."

Lorenza gave a cry of terror; she knew no bounds to Balsamo's power, and believed his threat. Balsamo was saved. While she was plunged in this fresh abyss of suffering which she had not foreseen, and while her vacillating reason saw itself encircled by a never-ceasing round of torture, the sound of the signal-bell, pulled by Fritz, reached Balsamo's ear. It struck three times quickly, and at regular intervals.

"A courier," said he.

Then after a pause another ring was heard.

"And in haste," he said.

"Ah!" said Lorenza, "you are about to leave me, then!"

He took the young girl's cold hand in his. "Once more, and for the last time, Lorenza," said he, "let us live on good terms with each other, like brother and sister. Since destiny unites us to each other, let us make it a friend and not an executioner."

Lorenza did not reply. Her eye, motionless and fixed in a sort of dreamy melancholy, seemed to seek some thought which was ever flying from her into infinite space, and which, perhaps, she could not find because she had sought it too long and too earnestly, like those who, after having lived in darkness, gaze too ardently on the sun, and are blinded by excess of light. Balsamo took her hand and kissed it without her giving any sign of life. Then he advanced towards the chimney. Immediately Lorenza started from her torpor, and eagerly fixed her gaze upon him.

"Oh," said he, "you wish to know how I leave this, in order to leave it one day after me and flee from me as you threatened. And therefore you awake — therefore you look at me."

Then, passing his hand over his forehead, as if he imposed a painful task on himself, he stretched his hand

towards the young girl, and said, in a commanding voice, looking at her as if he were darting a javelin against her head and breast:

“Sleep!”

The word was scarcely uttered when Lorenza bent like a flower upon its stem; her head, for a single moment unsteady, drooped and rested against the cushion of the sofa; her hands, of an opaque and waxen whiteness, glided down her side, rustling her silken dress.

Balsamo, seeing her so beautiful, approached her and pressed his lips upon her lovely forehead.

Then Lorenza’s features brightened, as if a breath from the God of Love himself had swept away the cloud which rested on her brow. Her lips opened tremulously, her eyes swam in voluptuous tears, and she sighed as the angels must have sighed, when in earth’s youthful prime they stooped to love the children of men.

Balsamo looked upon her for a moment, as if unable to withdraw his gaze; then, as the bell sounded anew, he turned towards the chimney, touched a spring, and disappeared behind the flowers.

Fritz was waiting for him in the salon, with a man dressed in the closely-fitting jacket of a courier, and wearing thick boots armed with long spurs.

The commonplace and inexpressive features of this man showed him to be one of the people; but his eye had in it a spark of sacred fire, which seemed to have been breathed into him by some superior intelligence.

His left hand grasped a short and knotty whip, while with his right hand he made some signs to Balsamo, which the latter instantly recognised, and to which, without speaking, he replied by touching his forehead with his forefinger.

The postilion’s hand moved upwards to his breast, where it traced another sign, which an indifferent observer would not have remarked, so closely did it resemble the movement made in fastening a button.

To this sign the master replied by showing a ring which he wore upon his finger.

Before this powerful signet the messenger bent his knee.

“Whence come you?” asked Balsamo.

“From Rouen, master.”

“What is your profession?”

“I am a courier in the service of the Duchess de Grammont.”

“Who placed you there?”

“The will of the Great Copht.”

“What orders did you receive when you entered the service?”

“To have no secret from the master.”

“Whither are you going?”

“To Versailles.”

“What are you carrying?”

“A letter.”

“For whom?”

“For the minister.”

“Give it me.”

The courier took a letter from a leathern bag fastened upon his shoulders behind, and gave it to Balsamo.

“Shall I wait?” asked he.

“Yes.”

“Very well.”

“Fritz!”

The German appeared.

“Keep Sebastian concealed in the offices.”

“He knows my name,” murmured the adept, with superstitious fear.

“He knows everything,” said Fritz, drawing him away.

When Balsamo was once more alone, he looked at the unbroken, deeply-cut seal of the letter, which the imploring glance of the messenger had entreated him to respect as much as possible. Then, slowly and pensively, he once more mounted towards Lorenza’s apartment, and opened the door of communication.

Lorenza was still sleeping, but seemingly tired and enervated by inaction. He took her hand, which she closed convulsively, and then he placed the letter, sealed as it was, upon her heart.

“Do you see?” he asked.

“Yes, I see,” replied Lorenza.

“What is the object which I hold in my hand?”

“A letter.”

“Can you read it?”

“I can.”

“Do so, then.”

With closed eyes and palpitating bosom, Lorenza repeated, word for word, the following lines, which Balsamo wrote down as she spoke:—

DEAR BROTHER,—As I had foreseen, my exile will be at least of some service to us. I have this morning seen the president of Rouen; he is for us, but timid. I urged him in your name; he has at last decided, and the remonstrance of his division will be in Versailles within a week. I am just about setting off for Rennes to rouse Karadeuc and La Chalotais, who are sleeping on their post. Our agent from Caudebec was in Rouen. I have seen him. England will not stop midway; she is preparing a sharp notification for the cabinet of Versailles. X— asked me if he should produce it, and I authorized him to do so. You will receive the last pamphlets of Morando and Delille against the Dubarry. They are petards which might blow up a town. A sad report reached me, that there was disgrace in the air; but as you have not written to me, I laugh at it. Do not leave me in doubt, however, and reply courier for courier. Your message will find me at Caen, where I have some of our gentlemen riding quarantine. Adieu, I salute you.

DUCHESS DE GRAMMONT.

After reading thus far, Lorenza stopped.

“You see nothing more?” asked Balsamo.

“I see nothing.”

“No postscript?”

“No.”

Balsamo, whose brow had gradually smoothed as Lorenza read the letter, now took it from her.

"A curious document," said he, "and one for which I would be well paid. Oh, how can any one write such things!" he continued. "Yes, it is always women who are the ruin of great men. This Choiseul could not have been overthrown by an army of enemies, by a world of intrigues, and now the breath of a woman crushes while it caresses him. Yes, we all perish by the treachery or the weakness of women. If we have a heart, and in that heart a sensitive chord, we are lost."

And, as he spoke, Balsamo gazed with inexpressible tenderness at Lorenza, who palpitated under his glance.

"Is it true, what I think?" said he.

"No, no, it is not true!" she replied eagerly; "you see plainly that I love you too dearly to do you any hurt like those women you spoke of, without sense and without heart."

Balsamo allowed himself to be caressed by the arms of his enchantress; all at once a double ring of Fritz's bell was repeated twice.

"Two visits," said Balsamo.

A single violent ring completed the telegraphic message.

"Important ones," continued the master; and, disengaging himself from Lorenza's arms, he hastened from the apartment, leaving the young girl still asleep. On his way he met the courier, who was waiting for orders.

"Here is your letter," said he.

"What must I do with it?"

"Deliver it as addressed."

"Is that all?"

"Yes."

The courier looked at the envelope and at the seal, and seeing them as intact as when he had brought them, expressed his satisfaction, and disappeared in the darkness.

"What a pity not to keep such an autograph," said Balsamo; "and, above all, what a pity not to be able to forward it by a safe hand to the king."

Fritz now appeared.

“Who is there?” he asked.

“A man and a woman.”

“Have they been here before?”

“No.”

“Do you know them?”

“No.”

“Is the woman young?”

“Young and handsome.”

“The man?”

“From sixty to sixty-five years of age.”

“Where are they?”

“In the salon.”

Balsamo entered.

CHAPTER LXXXIII.

THE EVOCATION.

THE countess had completely concealed her face in a hood. As she had found time in passing to call at the family residence, she had assumed the dress of a citizen's wife. She had come in a hackney-coach with the marshal, who, even more timid than she, had donned a grey dress like that of a superior servant in a respectable household.

“Do you recognise me, count?” said Madame Dubarry.

“Perfectly, madame la comtesse.”

Richelieu had remained in the background.

“Deign to be seated, madame, and you, also, monsieur.”

“This is my steward,” said the countess.

“You err, madame,” said Balsamo, bowing; “the gentleman is the Marshal Duke de Richelieu, whom I recognise easily, and who would be very ungrateful if he did not recognise me.”

“How so?” asked the duke, quite confounded, as Tallemant des Reaux would say.

“Monseigneur duke, a man owes a little gratitude, I think, to those who have saved his life.”

“Ah, ah! duke,” said the countess, laughing; “do you hear, duke?”

“What! you have saved my life, count?” asked Richelieu, quite astounded.

“Yes, monseigneur; at Vienna, in the year 1725 when you were ambassador there.”

“In 1725! But you were not born then, my dear monsieur.”

Balsamo smiled.

"It seems to me that I was, monseigneur duke," said he, "since I met you, dying, or rather dead, upon a litter; you had just received a sword-thrust right through your body, and I poured three drops of my elixir upon the wound. There, hold! — the place where you are ruffling your Alençon lace — rather fine, I must say, for a steward."

"But," interrupted the marshal, "you are scarcely thirty-five years of age, count."

"There, duke," cried the countess, laughing heartily, "there, you are before the sorcerer; do you believe now?"

"I am stupefied, countess. But at that period," continued the duke, addressing Balsamo, "you called yourself —"

"Oh! duke, we sorcerers change our name in each generation. Now, in 1725, names ending in *us*, *os*, or *as*, were the fashion; and I should not be surprised if, at that time, I had been seized with the whim of bartering my name for some Latin or Greek one. This being premised, I wait your commands, countess, and yours also, monseigneur."

"Count, the marshal and I have come to consult you."

"You do me too much honour, madame, especially if this idea arose naturally in your minds."

"Oh! in the most natural manner in the world, count; your prediction still haunts my thoughts, only I fear it will not be realised."

"Never doubt the dictates of science, madame."

"Oh! oh!" said Richelieu; "but our crown is a hazardous game, count. It is not here an affair of a wound which three drops of elixir can cure."

"No; but of a minister whom three words can ruin," replied Balsamo. "Well, have I guessed rightly? Tell me."

"Perfectly," said the trembling countess. "Tell me, in truth, what think you of all this, duke?"

"Oh! do not let such a trifl^e astonish you, madame," said Balsamo; "whoever sees Madame Dubarry and Richelieu uneasy, may guess the cause without magic."

"But," added the marshal, "if you can give us the remedy, I will perfectly adore you."

"The remedy for your complaint?"

"Yes; we are ill of the Choiseul."

"And you wish to be cured?"

"Yes, great magician."

"Count, you will not leave us in our embarrassment," said the countess; "your honour is engaged."

"My best services are at your command, madame; but I first wish to know if the duke had not some definite plan formed when he came here?"

"I confess it, count. Really it is delightful to have a count for a sorcerer; we do not need to change our modes of speech."

Balsamo smiled.

"Come," said he, "let us be frank."

"Pon honour, I wish for nothing else," replied the duke.

"You had some consultation to hold with me!"

"That is true."

"Ah, deceiver!" said the countess, "you never spoke of that to me."

"I could only speak of it to the count, and that in the most secret corner of his ear," replied the marshal.

"Why, duke?"

"Because you would have blushed, countess, to the whites of your eyes."

"Oh! tell it now, marshal, just to satisfy my curiosity. I am rouged, so you shall see nothing."

"Well!" said Richelieu, "this is what I thought. Take care, countess, I am going to take a most extravagant flight."

"Fly as high as you will, duke, I am prepared."

"Oh, but I fear you will beat me the moment you hear what I am about to say."

"You are not accustomed to be beaten, monseigneur duke," said Balsamo to the old marshal.

"Well," continued he, enchanted with the compliment. "here it is. Saving the displeasure of madame, his Maj — how am I to express it?"

"How tiresome he is!" cried the countess.

"You will have it, then?"

"Yes, yes; a hundred times, yes!"

"Then I will venture. It is a sad thing to say, count, but his Majesty is no longer amusable. The word is not of my originating, countess; it is Madame de Maintenon's."

"There is nothing in that which hurts me, duke," said Madame Dubarry.

"So much the better; then I shall feel at my ease. Well, the count, who discovers such precious elixirs, must —"

"Find one which shall restore to the king the faculty of being amused."

"Exactly."

"Oh! duke, that is mere child's play — the *a b c* of our craft. Any charlatan can furnish you with a philter —"

"Whose virtue," continued the duke, "would be put to the account of madame's merit."

"Duke!" exclaimed the countess.

"Oh! I knew you would be angry: but you would have it."

"Monseigneur duke," replied Balsamo, "you were right. Look! the countess blushes. But just now we agreed that neither wounds nor love were to be treated of at present. A philter will not rid France of Monsieur de Choiseul. In fact, if the king loved madame ten times more than he does, and that is impossible, Monsieur de Choiseul would still retain the same influence over his mind which madame exerts over his heart."

"Very true," said the marshal; "but it was our only resource."

"You think so?"

"*Dame!* find another."

"Oh! that would be easy."

"Easy! do you hear, countess? — these sorcerers stop at nothing."

"Why should I stop, where the only thing necessary is simply to prove to the king that Monsieur de Choiseul alone betrays him — that is to say, what the king would think betraying; for of course Monsieur de Choiseul does not think he betrays him in acting as he does."

"And what does he do?"

"You know as well as I do, countess; he supports the parliament in their revolt against the royal authority."

"Certainly; but we must know by what means."

"By the means of agents who encourage them by promising them impunity."

"Who are the agents? We must know that."

"Do you believe, for example, that Madame de Grammont is gone for any other purpose than to sustain the ardent, and warm the timid?"

"Certainly; she left for no other reason," exclaimed the countess.

"Yes; but the king thinks it a simple exile."

"It is true."

"How can you prove to him that in this departure there is anything more than he supposes?"

"By accusing Madame de Grammont."

"Ah! if there were nothing necessary but to accuse her, count!" said the marshal.

"But, unfortunately, the accusation must be proved," added the countess.

"And if this accusation were proved, incontrovertibly proved, do you think Monsieur de Choiseul would still be minister?"

"Certainly not," said the countess.

"Nothing is necessary then but to discover the treachery of Monsieur de Choiseul," pursued Balsamo, with assurance; "and to display it clearly, precisely, and palpably before the eyes of his Majesty."

The marshal threw himself back upon an arm-chair, and laughed loud and long.

"Charming!" he exclaimed; "he stops at nothing! Discover Monsieur de Choiseul in the act of committing treason! — that is all, nothing more!"

Balsamo remained calm and unmoved, waiting until the marshal's mirth had subsided.

"Come," said Balsamo, "let us speak seriously, and recapitulate."

"So be it."

"Is not Monsieur de Choiseul suspected of encouraging the revolt of the parliament?"

"Granted; but the proof?"

"Is not Monsieur de Choiseul supposed," continued Balsamo, "to be attempting to bring about a war with England, in order that he may become indispensable?"

"It is so believed; but the proof?"

"Is not Monsieur de Choiseul the declared enemy of the countess, and does he not seek, by all possible means, to drag her from the throne I promised her?"

"Ah! all this is very true," said the countess; "but once more I repeat, it must be proved. Oh! that I could prove it!"

"What is necessary for that? A mere trifle."

The marshal gave a low whistle.

"Yes, a mere trifle!" said he, sarcastically.

"A confidential letter, for example," said Balsamo.

"Yes; that is all — a mere nothing."

"A letter from Madame de Grammont would do, would it not, marshal?" continued the count.

"Sorcerer, my good sorcerer, find me such a one!" cried Madame Dubarry. "I have been trying for five years; I have spent a hundred thousand francs per annum, and have never succeeded."

"Because you never applied to me, madame," said Balsamo.

"How so?" said the countess.

"Without doubt, if you had applied to me, I could have assisted you."

“Could you? Count, is it yet too late?”

The count smiled.

“It is never too late,” said he.

“Oh, my dear count!” said Madame Dubarry, clasping her hands.

“You want a letter, then?”

“Yes.”

“From Madame de Grammont?”

“If it is possible.”

“Which shall compromise Monsieur de Choiseul on the three points which I have mentioned?”

“I would give — one of my eyes to see it.”

“Oh! countess, that would be too dear; inasmuch as this letter — I will give it you for nothing.”

And Balsamo drew a folded paper from his pocket.

“What is that?” asked the countess, devouring the paper with her eyes.

“Yes, what is that?” repeated the duke.

“The letter you wished for.”

And the count, amidst the most profound silence, read the letter, with which our readers are already acquainted, to his two astonished auditors.

As he read, the countess opened her eyes to their utmost width, and began to lose countenance.

“It is a forgery,” said Richelieu, when the letter had been read. “Diable! we must take care.”

“Monsieur, it is the simple and literal copy of a letter from the Duchess de Grammont, which a courier, despatched this morning from Rouen, is now carrying to the Duke de Choiseul at Versailles.”

“Oh, heavens!” cried the marshal, “do you speak truly, Count Balsamo?”

“I always speak the truth, marshal.”

“The duchess has written such a letter?”

“Yes, marshal.”

“She could not be so imprudent.”

“It is incredible, I confess; but so it is.”

The old duke looked at the countess, who had not the power to utter a single word.

“Well,” said she, at last, “I am like the duke, I can scarcely believe — excuse me, count — that Madame de Grammont, a woman of sense, should compromise her own position, and that of her brother, by a letter so strongly expressed. Besides, to know of such a letter one must have read it —”

“And then,” said the marshal, quickly, “if the count had read this letter, he would have kept it; it is a precious treasure.”

Balsamo gently shook his head.

“Oh,” said he, “such a plan might suit those who have to break open letters in order to ascertain their contents; — but not those who, like myself, can read through the envelopes. Fie upon you! Besides, what interest could I have in ruining Monsieur de Choiseul and Madame de Grammont? You come to consult me, as friends, I presume, and I answer you in the same manner. You wish me to render you a service, I do so. You do not mean, I suppose, to ask me the price of my consultation, as you would the fortune-tellers of the Quai de la Ferraille?”

“Oh, count!” said Madame Dubarry.

“Well, I give you this advice, and you seem not to comprehend it. You express a wish to overthrow Monsieur de Choiseul, and you seek the means. I tell you one. You approve of it, I put it into your hands, and — you do not believe it.”

“Because — because — Count — I —”

“The letter exists, I tell you, for I have the copy.”

“But who told you of its existence, count?” cried Richelieu.

“Ah! that is a great word — who told me! You wish to know, in one moment, as much as I know; I, the worker, the sage, the adept who has lived three thousand seven hundred years.”

“Oh! oh!” said Richelieu, discouraged; “you are going to alter the good opinion I had formed of you, count.”

"I do not ask you to believe me, my lord duke, it is not I who brought you hither from the chase."

"Duke, he is right," said the countess. "Monsieur de Balsamo, pray do not be hasty."

"He who has time never gets impatient, madame."

"Will you be so good as to add another favour to those you have already conferred upon me, and tell me how these secrets are revealed to you."

"I shall not hesitate, madame," said Balsamo, speaking as if he was searching for each word separately; "the revelation is made to me by a voice."

"By a voice!" cried the duke and the countess, simultaneously; "a voice tells you all?"

"Everything I wish to know."

"Was it a voice that told you what Madame de Grammont has written to her brother?"

"I repeat, madame, it is a voice which tells me."

"Miraculous!"

"Why, do you not believe it?"

"Well, no, count," said the duke; "how do you imagine I can believe such things?"

"Would you believe it if I told you what the courier who carries the letter to Monsieur de Choiseul is doing at this moment?"

"Dame!" exclaimed the countess.

"I would believe it," cried the duke, "if I heard the voice; but messieurs the necromancers and magicians have the sole privilege of seeing and hearing the supernatural."

Balsamo looked at Richelieu with a singular expression, which made a shudder pass through the veins of the countess, and even sent a slight chill to the heart of the selfish sceptic called the Duke de Richelieu.

"Yes," said he, after a long silence, "I alone see and hear supernatural objects and sounds, but when I am in the society of people of rank — of your talent, duke, and of your beauty, countess, I display my treasures and share them. Would you wish greatly to hear the mysterious voice which speaks to me?"

"Yes," said the duke, clenching his hands tightly that he might not tremble.

"Yes," stammered the countess, trembling.

"Well, duke — well, countess, you shall hear it. What language shall it speak?"

"French, if you please," said the countess. "I know no other; any other would frighten me."

"And you, duke?"

"As madame said, French; for then I shall be able to repeat what the devil says, and to discover if he speaks the language of my friend, Monsieur de Voltaire, correctly."

Balsamo, his head drooping on his breast, crossed over to the door leading into the salon, which opened, as we are aware, on the stairs.

"Permit me," said he, to conceal you here, in order not to expose you to the risk of discovery."

The countess turned pale, approached the duke, and took his arm.

Balsamo, almost touching the door leading to the stairs, made a step towards that part of the house in which Lorenza was, and pronounced in a low voice the following words, in the Arabic tongue, which we translate:

"My friend — do you hear me? If so, pull the cord of the bell twice."

Balsamo waited to see the effect of these words, and looked at the duke and countess, who opened their eyes and ears, and the more so that they could not understand what the count said.

The bell sounded twice distinctly.

The countess started from her sofa, and the duke wiped his forehead with his handkerchief.

"Since you hear me," continued Balsamo in the same language, "press the marble button which forms the right eye of the sculptured figure on the chimney-piece; the back will open; pass out by this opening, cross my room, descend the stairs, and enter the apartment adjoining the one in which I am."

Immediately a faint noise, like a scarcely audible breath, told Balsamo that his order had been understood and obeyed.

“What language is that?” asked the duke, pretending assurance. “The cabalistic language?”

“Yes, duke; the language used for the summoning of spirits.”

“You said we should understand it.”

“What the voice said, but not what I say.”

“Has the devil appeared yet?”

“Who spoke of the devil, duke?”

“Whom do you evoke but the devil?”

“Every superior spirit, every supernatural being, can be evoked.”

“And the superior spirit, the supernatural being — ?”

Balsamo extended his hand towards the tapestry which closed the door of the next apartment.

“Is in direct communication with me, monseigneur.”

“I am afraid,” said the countess; “are you, duke?”

“Faith countess, I confess to you that I would almost as soon be at Mahon or at Philipsbourg.”

“Madame la comtesse, and you, monseigneur the duke, listen, since you wish to hear,” said Balsamo, severely, and he turned towards the door.

CHAPTER LXXXIV.

THE VOICE.

THERE was a moment of solemn silence, then Balsamo asked in French:

“Are you there?”

“I am,” replied a clear, silvery voice, which, penetrating through the hangings and the doors, seemed to those present rather like a metallic sound than a human voice.

“*Peste!* it is becoming interesting,” said the duke; “and all without torches, magic, or Bengal lights.”

“It is fearful,” whispered the countess.

“Listen attentively to my questions,” continued Balsamo.

“I listen with my whole being.”

“First, tell me how many persons are with me at this moment?”

“Two.”

“Of what sex?”

“A man and a woman.”

“Read the man’s name in my thoughts.”

“The Duke de Richelieu.”

“And the woman’s?”

“Madame the Countess Dubarry.”

“Ha!” said the duke, “this is becoming serious.”

“I never saw anything like it,” murmured the trembling countess.

“Good!” said Balsamo; “now read the first sentence of the letter I hold in my hand.”

The voice obeyed.

The duke and the countess looked at each other with astonishment, bordering upon admiration.

“What has become of the letter I wrote at your dictation?”

“It is hastening on.”

“In which direction?”

“Towards the East.”

“Is it far?”

“Yes, very far.”

“Who is carrying it?”

“A man dressed in a green vest, leathern cap, and large boots.”

“On foot or on horseback?”

“On horseback.”

“What kind of a horse?”

“A piebald horse.”

“Where do you see him?”

There was a moment’s silence.

“Look,” said Balsamo, imperatively.

“On a wide road, planted with trees.”

“But on which road?”

“I do not know; all the roads are alike.”

“What! does nothing indicate what road it is — no post nor inscription?”

“Stay! stay! A carriage is passing near the man on horseback; it crosses his course, coming towards me.”

“What kind of carriage?”

“A heavy carriage, full of abbés and soldiers.”

“A stage coach,” said Richelieu.

“Is there no inscription upon the carriage?” asked Balsamo.

“Yes,” said the voice.

“Read it.”

“Versailles is written in yellow letters upon the carriage, but the word is nearly effaced.”

“Leave the carriage and follow the courier.”

“I do not see him now.”

“Why do you not see him?”

“Because the road turns.”

“Turn the corner, and follow him.”

“Oh! he gallops as quickly as his horse can fly; he looks at his watch.”

“What do you see in front of the horse?”

“A long avenue, splendid buildings, a large town.”

“Follow him still.”

“I follow.”

“Well?”

“The courier redoubles his blows, the animal is bathed in perspiration; its iron-shod hoofs strike the pavement so loudly that all the passers-by look round. Ah! the courier dashes into a long street which descends. He turns to the right; he slackens his horse’s speed; he stops at the door of a large hotel.”

“Now you must follow him attentively, do you hear?”

The voice heaved a sigh.

“You are tired. I understand.”

“Oh! crushed with weariness.”

“Cease to be fatigued, I will it.”

“Ah! Thanks.”

Are you still fatigued?”

“No.”

“Do you still see the courier?”

“Yes, yes; he ascends a large stone staircase; he is preceded by a valet in blue and gold livery; he crosses large salons full of splendid gilt ornaments; he stops at a small lighted closet. The valet opens the door and retires.”

“What do you see?”

“The courier bows.”

“To whom does he bow?”

“He bows to a man seated at a desk, with his back towards the door.”

“How is the man dressed?”

“Oh, in full dress, as if he were going to a ball.”

“Has he any decoration?”

"He wears a broad blue ribbon crosswise on his breast."

"His face?"

"I cannot see it. Ah!—"

"What?"

"He turns."

"What sort of features has he?"

"A keen glance, irregular features, beautiful teeth."

"What age?"

"From fifty to fifty-eight years of age."

"The duke!" whispered the countess to the marshal; "it is the duke!"

The marshal made a sign, as if to say, "Yes, it is he; but listen."

"Well?" asked Balsamo.

"The courier gives a letter to the man with the blue ribbon—"

"You may say to the duke; he is a duke."

"The courier," repeated the obedient voice, "takes a letter from the leathern bag behind him, and gives it to the duke. The duke breaks the seal, and reads it attentively."

"Well?"

"He takes a pen and a sheet of paper, and writes."

"He writes!" said Richelieu. "*Diable!* if we could only know what he writes."

"Tell me what he writes," commanded Balsamo.

"I cannot."

"Because you are too far away. Enter the room. Are you there?"

"Yes."

"Look over his shoulder."

"I am doing so."

"Now read."

"The writing is bad, small, irregular."

"Read it; I will it."

The countess and Richelieu held their breaths.

"Read," repeated Balsamo, more imperatively still.

"My sister," said the voice, trembling and hesitating.

"It is the reply," said the countess and Richelieu in the same breath.

"My sister," continued the voice, "do not be uneasy. The crisis took place, it is true; it was a dangerous one; that is true also; but it is over. I am anxiously awaiting to-morrow, for to-morrow it will be my turn to act on the offensive, and everything leads me to expect a decisive triumph.

"The parliament of Rouen, Milord X——, the petards, are all satisfactory.

"To-morrow, after my interview with the king, I shall add a *post scriptum* to my letter, and send it you by the same courier."

Balsamo, with his left hand extended, seemed to drag each word painfully from the voice, while with the right hand he hastily took down those lines which Monsieur de Choiseul was at the same time writing in his closet at Versailles.

"Is that all?" asked Balsamo.

"That is all."

"What is the duke doing now?"

"He folds the paper on which he has just written, and puts it into a small portfolio, which he takes from the pocket in the left side of his coat."

"You hear," said Balsamo, to the almost stupefied countess. "Well?"

"Then he sends away the courier."

"What does he say to him?"

"I only heard the end of the sentence."

"What was it?"

"'At one o'clock at the postern gate of Trianon.' The courier bows and retires."

"Yes," said Richelieu, "he makes an appointment to meet the courier when his audience is over, as he says in his letter."

Balsamo made a sign with his hand to command silence.

"What is the duke doing now?" he asked.

"He rises; he holds the letter he has received in his hand; he goes straight towards his bed, enters the passage between it and the wall, and presses a spring which opens an iron box; he throws the letter into the box and closes it."

"Oh!" cried the countess and the duke, turning pale, "this is, in truth, magical."

"Do you know now what you wish to know, madame?" asked Balsamo.

"Count," said Madame Dubarry, approaching him with terror, "you have rendered me a service which I would pay with ten years of my life, or rather which I can never pay. Ask what you wish."

"Oh madame, you know we have already an account."

"Speak; say what you wish."

"The time has not yet come."

"Well, when it comes, if it were a million —"

Balsamo smiled.

"Oh, countess," exclaimed the marshal, "you should rather ask the count for a million! Cannot a man who knows what he knows, and who sees what he sees, discover diamonds and gold in the bosom of the earth as easily as he discovers the thoughts in the heart of man?"

"Then, count," said the countess, "I bow myself before you in my weakness."

"No, countess; one day you will acquit your debt towards me. I shall give you the opportunity."

"Count," said Richelieu to Balsamo, "I am conquered, — crushed. I believe."

"As Saint Thomas believed, duke. I do not call that believing, but seeing."

"Call it what you will, I will make the *amende honorable*; and, in future, if I am asked about sorcerers, I shall know what to say."

Balsamo smiled.

"Madame," said he to the countess, "will you permit me to do one thing now?"

“Speak.”

“My spirit is wearied. Let me restore it to liberty by a magic formula.”

“Do so, monsieur.”

“Lorenza,” said Balsamo, in Arabic, “thanks, I love you; return to your apartment by the same way you came, and wait for me. Go, my beloved.”

“I am very tired,” replied in Italian the voice, softer still than even during the evocation. “Hasten, Acharat.”

“I come,” and the footsteps died away in the distance with the same rustling noise with which they had approached.

Then Balsamo, after a few moments’ interval, during which he convinced himself of Lorenza’s departure, bowed profoundly, but with majestic dignity, to his visitors, who returned to their fiacre more like intoxicated persons than human beings gifted with reason, so much were they staggered and absorbed by the crowd of tumultuous ideas which assailed them.

CHAPER LXXXV.

DISGRACE.

THE next morning, as the great clock of Versailles struck eleven, King Louis XV. issued from his apartment, and, crossing the adjoining gallery, called in a loud and stern voice:

“ Monsieur de la Vrillière ! ”

The king was pale, and seemed agitated. The more he endeavoured to hide his emotion, the more evident it became from the embarrassment of his looks, and the rigid tension of his usually impassible features.

A death-like stillness pervaded the long ranks of courtiers, amongst whom the Duke de Richelieu and Count Jean Dubarry might be seen, both seemingly calm, and affecting indifference or ignorance as to what was going on.

The Duke de la Vrillière approached, and took a *lettre-de-cachet* from the king's hand.

“ Is the Duke de Choiseul at Versailles ? ” asked the king.

“ Yes, sire. He returned from Paris yesterday, at two o'clock in the afternoon.”

“ Is he in his hotel, or in the château ? ”

“ In the château, sire.”

“ Carry this order to him, duke,” said the king.

A shudder ran through the whole file of spectators, who bent down whispering, like ears of corn under the blast of a toruado.

The king, frowning, as if he wished to add terror to this scene, haughtily entered his cabinet, followed by the captain of the guard and the commandant of the Light Horse.

All eyes followed Monsieur de la Vrillière, who slowly crossed the court-yard and entered Monsieur de Choiseul's apartments, rather uneasy at the commission with which he was charged.

During this time, loud and eager conversations, some threatening, some timid, burst forth on all sides around the old marshal, who pretended to be even more surprised than the others, but who, thanks to his cunning smile, duped no one.

Monsieur de la Vrillière returned, and was immediately surrounded.

“Well ?” cried every one.

“Well ? It was an order of banishment.”

“Of banishment ?”

“Yes ; in due form.”

“Then you have read it, duke ?”

“I have.”

“Positively ?”

“Judge for yourselves.”

And the Duke de la Vrillière repeated the following lines, which he had treasured up with the retentive memory which marks the true courtier :—

“**M**Y COUSIN,— The displeasure which your conduct causes me obliges me to exile you to Chanteloup, whither you must repair in four-and-twenty hours from this time. I should have sent you further, had it not been for the particular esteem I feel for Madame de Choiseul, whose health is exceedingly interesting to me. Take care that your conduct does not force me to proceed to ulterior measures.”

A long murmur ran through the group which surrounded Monsieur de la Vrillière.

“And what did he reply to you, Monsieur de St. Florentin ?” asked Richelieu, affecting not to give to the duke either his new name or his new title.

“He replied, ‘Duke, I feel convinced of the great pleasure you feel in being the bearer of this letter.’”

“That was harsh, my poor duke,” said Jean.

"What could you expect, count? A man does not receive such a tile thrown upon his head without crying out a little."

"Do you know what he will do?" asked Richelieu.

"Most probably obey."

"Ahem!" said the marshal.

"Here is the duke coming!" said Jean, who stood as sentinel at the window.

"Coming here?" exclaimed the Duke de la Vrillière.

"I told you so, Monsieur de St. Florentin."

"He is crossing the court-yard," continued Jean.

"Alone?"

"Quite alone; his portfolio under his arm."

"Oh! good heavens!" said Richelieu, "if yesterday's scene should be repeated!"

"Do not speak of it; I shudder at the thought," replied Jean.

He had scarcely spoken, when the Duke de Choiseul appeared at the entrance of the gallery with head erect and confident look, alarming his enemies, or those who would declare themselves such on his disgrace, by his calm and piercing glance.

As no one expected this step after what had happened, no one opposed his progress.

"Are you sure you read correctly, duke?" asked Jean.

"Parbleu!"

"And he returns after such a letter as you have described?"

"Upon my honour, I cannot understand it."

"The king will send him to the Bastille."

"That would cause a fearful commotion."

"I should almost pity him."

"Look! he is going to the king! It is incredible."

In fact, without paying attention to the show of resistance which the astounded usher offered, Monsieur de Choiseul entered the king's cabinet. Louis, on seeing him, uttered an exclamation of astonishment.

The duke held his *lettre-de-cachet* in his hand, and showed it to the king, almost smilingly.

“Sire,” said he, “as your Majesty had the goodness to forewarn me yesterday, I have indeed received a letter to-day.”

“Yes, monsieur,” replied the king.

“And as your Majesty had the goodness yesterday to tell me not to look upon any letter as serious which was not ratified by the express words of the king, I have come to request an explanation.”

“It will be very short, my lord duke,” replied the king. “To-day, the letter is valid.”

“Valid?” said the duke. “So offensive a letter to so devoted a servant?”

“A devoted servant, monsieur, does not make his master play a ridiculous part.”

“Sire,” replied the minister, haughtily, “I was born near the throne, that I might comprehend its majesty.”

“Monsieur,” replied the king, in a severe voice, “I will not keep you in suspense. Yesterday evening you received a courier from Madame de Grammont in your closet at Versailles.”

“It is true, sire.”

“He brought you a letter.”

“Are a brother and sister forbidden to correspond?”

“Wait a moment, if you please. I know the contents of that letter.”

“Oh, sire!”

“Here it is. I took the trouble to copy it with my own hand.”

And the king handed to the duke an exact copy of the letter he had received.

“Sire!”

“Do not deny it, duke; you placed the letter in an iron coffer standing at your bedside.”

The duke became pale as a spectre.

“That is not all,” continued the king, pitilessly; “you

have replied to Madame de Grammont's letter. I know the contents of that letter also. It is there in your portfolio, and only wants the *post scriptum*, which you are to add when you leave me. You see I am well informed, am I not?"

The duke wiped his forehead, on which the large drops of perspiration were standing, bowed without uttering a word, and left the closet, tottering as if he had been struck with apoplexy. Had it not been for the fresh air which fanned his face, he must have fallen.

But he was a man of strong will. When he reached the gallery he had regained his strength, and with erect forehead passed the hedge of courtiers, and entered his apartments in order to burn or lock up several papers. A quarter of an hour afterwards, he left the château in his carriage.

Monsieur de Choiseul's disgrace was a thunderbolt which set all France in flames.

The parliament, sustained in reality by the tolerance of the minister, proclaimed that the state had lost its firmest pillar. The nobility supported him as being one of themselves. The clergy felt themselves soothed by this man, whose personal dignity, often carried even to the extent of pride, gave almost an appearance of sanctity to his ministerial functions.

The encyclopedist or the philosophical party, who were very numerous, and also very strong, because they were reinforced by all the enlightened, clever, and cavilling spirits of the age, cried out loudly when the government was taken from the hands of a minister who admired Voltaire, pensioned the encyclopedia, and preserved, by developing them in a more useful manner, the traditions of Madame de Pompadour, the female Mæcenas of the writers of the *Mercure* and of philosophy in general.

The people had far better grounds for complaint than any of the other malcontents. They also complained, but without reasoning, and, as they always do, they hit the truth and laid bare the bleeding wound.

Monsieur de Choiseul, absolutely speaking, was a bad minister and a bad citizen ; but relatively he was a paragon of virtue, of morality, and of patriotism. When the people, dying of hunger in the fields, heard of his Majesty's prodigality and of Madame Dubarry's ruinous whims, when open warnings were sent him, such as "*L'homme aux quarante écus*," or advices like "*Le Contrat Social*," and secret revelations like the "*Nouvelles à la main*," and the "*Idées singulières d'un bon citoyen*," they were terrified at the prospect of falling back into the impure hands of the favourite, *less respectable than a collier's wife*, as Bauveau said, and into the hands of the favourite's favourites ; and wearied with so much suffering, they were alarmed to behold the future looking even blacker than the past.

It was not that the people, who had strong antipathies, had also strong sympathies. They did not like the parliament, because they who ought to have been their natural protectors had always abandoned them for idle inquiries, questions of precedence, or selfish interests ; and because, dazzled by the borrowed light of the royal omnipotence, they imagined themselves something like an aristocracy, occupying an intermediate place between the nobility and the people.

They disliked the nobility from instinct, and from memory. They feared the sword as much as they hated the church. Their position could not therefore be affected by the disgrace of Monsieur de Choiseul, but they heard the complaints of the nobility, of the clergy, of the parliament, and this noise joined to their own murmurs made an uproar which intoxicated them.

The consequence of these feelings was regret, and a sort of a *quasi* popularity for the name of Choiseul.

All Paris — the word in this case can be justified by the facts — accompanied the exile on his way to Chanteloup as far as the town gates.

The people lined the road which the carriage was to take, while the members of the parliament and the court, who

could not be received by the duke, stationed themselves in their carriages in front of the crowd of people, that they might salute him as he passed, and bid him adieu.

The procession was the densest at the Barrière d'Enfer, which is on the road to Touraine, at which place there was such a conflux of foot passengers, horsemen, and carriages that the traffic was interrupted for several hours.

When the duke had crossed the barrier, he found himself escorted by more than a hundred carriages, which formed a sort of triumphal procession around him.

Acclamations and sighs followed him on all sides, but he had too much sense and penetration not to know that all this noise was not so much occasioned by regret for him personally, as by the fear of those unknown people who were to rise upon his ruin.

A short way from the barrier a post-chaise, galloping along the crowded road, met the procession, and had it not been for the skill of the postilion, the horses, white with foam and dust, would have dashed against Monsieur de Choiseul's equipage.

A head bent forward out of the carriage window, and Monsieur de Choiseul leaned out also from his.

Monsieur d'Aiguillon bowed profoundly to the fallen minister, whose heritage he had come to obtain. Monsieur de Choiseul threw himself back in the carriage; a single second had sufficed to wither the laurels which had crowned his disgrace.

But at the same moment, as a compensation no doubt, a carriage drawn by eight horses and bearing the royal arms of France, which was seen advancing along the cross road from Sèvres to St. Cloud, and which, whether by accident or on account of the crowd, did not turn into the high road, also crossed before Monsieur de Choiseul's carriage. The dauphiness, with her lady of honour, Madame de Noailles, was on the back seat of the carriage, on the front was Mademoiselle Andrée de Taverney. Monsieur de Choiseul, crimson with exultation and joy, bent forward out of the door, and bowed profoundly.

“Adieu, madame,” said he, in a low voice.

“*Au revoir, Monsieur de Choiseul,*” replied the dauphiness, with an imperial smile, and a majestic contempt of all etiquette.

“Long live Monsieur de Choiseul!” cried a voice enthusiastically, after the dauphiness had spoken.

At the sound of the voice, Mademoiselle Andrée turned round quickly.

“Make way! make way!” cried the dauphiness’s grooms, forcing Gilbert, pale as death, and pressing forward in his eagerness to range himself with the other people on the road.

It was indeed our hero, who, in his philosophical enthusiasm, had cried out, “Long live Monsieur de Choiseul!”

CHAPTER LXXXVI.

THE DUKE D'AIGUILLO.

WHILE melancholy visages and red eyes were the order of the day on the road from Paris to Chanteloup, Luciennes was radiant with blooming faces and charming smiles.

It was because at Luciennes was enthroned, not a mere mortal, although the most beautiful and most adorable of mortals, as the poets and courtiers declared, but the real divinity which governed France.

The evening after Monsieur de Choiseul's disgrace, therefore, the road leading to Luciennes was thronged with the same carriages which, in the morning, had rolled after the exiled minister. There were, besides, the partisans of the chancellor, and the votaries of corruption and self-interest, and altogether they made an imposing procession.

But Madame Dubaix had her police, and Jean knew, to a baron, the names of those who had strewn the last flowers over the expiring Choiseuls. He gave a list of these names to the countess, and they were pitilessly excluded, while the courage of the others in braving public opinion was rewarded by the protecting smile and the complete view of the goddess of the day. What joy and what congratulations echoed on all sides! Pressings of the hand, little smothered laughs, and enthusiastic applause, seemed to have become the habitual language of the inhabitants of Luciennes.

After the great throng of carriages, and the general crowd, followed the private receptions. Richelieu, the secret and modest hero, indeed, but yet the real hero of the

day, saw the crowd of visitors and petitioners pass away, and remained the last in the countess's boudoir.

"It must be confessed," said the countess, "that the Count Balsamo, or De Fenix, whichever name you give him, marshal, is one of the first men of the age. It would be a thousand pities if such sorcerers were still burnt."

"Certainly, countess, he is a great man," replied Richelieu.

"And a very handsome man, too; I have taken quite a fancy for him, duke."

"You will make me jealous," said Richelieu laughing, and eager besides to direct the conversation to a more positive and serious subject. "The Count de Fenix would make a dreadful minister of police."

"I was thinking of that," replied the countess; "only it is impossible."

"Why, countess?"

"Because he would render colleagues impossible."

"How so?"

"Knowing everything — seeing into their hand —"

Richelieu blushed beneath his rouge.

"Countess," replied he, "if he were my colleague, I would wish him to see into mine always, and communicate the cards to you; for you would ever see the knave of hearts on his knees before the queen, and prostrate at the feet of the king."

"Your wit puts us all to the blush, my dear duke," replied the countess. "But let us talk a little of our ministry. I think you mentioned that you warned your nephew D'Aiguillon of what would take place."

"He has arrived, madame, and with what Roman augurs would have called the best conjunction of omens possible: his carriage met Choiseul's leaving Paris."

"That is indeed a favourable omen," said the countess.

"Then he is coming here?"

"Madame, I thought that if Monsieur d'Aiguillon was seen at Luciennes at such a time, it would give rise to unpleasant comment; I begged him, therefore, to remain

in the village, until I should send for him according to your orders."

"Send for him immediately, then, marshal, for we are alone, or very nearly so."

"The more willingly that we quite understand each other; do we not, countess?"

"Certainly, duke. You prefer war to finance, do you not? or do you wish for the marine?"

"I prefer war, madame; I can be of most service in that department."

"True; I will speak of it to the king. You have no antipathies?"

"For whom?"

"For any colleagues his Majesty might present to you."

"I am the least difficult man in the world to live with, countess; but allow me to send for my nephew, since you are good enough to grant him the favour of an audience."

Richelieu approached the window and looked into the courtyard, now illuminated by the last rays of the setting sun. He made a sign to one of his footmen, who was keeping his eye fixed upon the window, and who darted off as soon as he received the signal.

Lights were now brought in.

Ten minutes after the footman had disappeared, a carriage rolled into the courtyard. The countess turned quickly towards the window.

Richelieu saw the movement, which seemed to him an excellent prognostic for Monsieur d'Aiguillon's affairs, and consequently for his own.

"She likes the uncle," said he to himself, "and she is in a fair way to like the nephew. We shall be masters here."

While he was feasting on these chimerical visions, a slight noise was heard at the door, and the confidential *valet-de-chambre*, throwing it open, announced the Duke d'Aiguillon.

He was an extremely handsome and graceful nobleman,

richly, and at the same time elegantly and tastefully, dressed. Monsieur d'Aiguillon had passed his earliest prime, but he was one of those men who, whether judged by their looks or minds, seem young until old age renders them infirm.

The cares of government had traced no wrinkles on his brow ; they had only enlarged the natural fold which seems to be the birthplace of great thoughts both in statesmen and in poets. His air and carriage were lofty and commanding, and his handsome features wore an expression at once of intelligence and melancholy, as if he knew that the hatred of ten millions of men weighed upon his head, but at the same time wished to prove that the weight was not beyond his strength.

Monsieur d'Aiguillon had the most beautiful hands in the world ; they looked white and delicate, even when buried in the softest folds of lace. A well-turned leg was prized very highly at that period, and the duke's was a model of manly elegance and aristocratic form. He combined the suavity of the poet with the nobility of the lord and the suppleness and ease of the dashing guardsman. He was thus a beau ideal for the countess in the three several qualities which the instinct of this beautiful sensualist taught her to love.

By a remarkable coincidence, or rather by a chain of circumstances skilfully contrived by Monsieur d'Aiguillon, these two objects of public animadversion, the favourite and the courtier, had, with all their mutual advantages, never yet met each other face to face at court.

For the last three years Monsieur d'Aiguillon had managed to be very busy either in Brittany or in his closet, and had not once shown himself at court, knowing well that a favourable or unfavourable crisis must soon take place. In the first case, it would be better to be comparatively unknown ; in the second, to disappear without leaving any trace behind, and thus be able easily to emerge from the gulf under new auspices, and in a new character.

Another motive influenced his calculations, — a motive which is the mainspring of romance, but which nevertheless was the most powerful of all.

Before Madame Dubarry was a countess, and every evening touched the crown of France with her lips, she had been a lovely, smiling, and adored creature; she had been loved, — a happiness she could no longer hope for, since she was feared.

Amongst all the young, rich, powerful, and handsome men who had paid court to Jeanne Vaubernier, amongst all the rhymers who had coupled her in their verses with the epithets of angel and divinity, the Duke d'Aiguillon had formerly figured in the first rank; but whether it was that the duke was not sufficiently ardent, or whether Mademoiselle Lange was not so easily pleased as her detractors pretended, or, lastly, whether the sudden attachment of the king had separated two hearts ready to unite, is not known, but the fact remains that Monsieur d'Aiguillon got his verses, acrostics, bouquets, and perfumes returned, and Mademoiselle Lange closed her door in the Rue des Petits Champs against him. The duke hastened to Brittany, suppressing his sighs; Mademoiselle Lange wafted all hers towards Versailles, to the Baron de Gonesse, — that is, the King of France.

D'Aiguillon's sudden disappearance had troubled Madame Dubarry very little, for she feared the remembrances of the past; but when subsequently she saw the silent attitude of her former admirer, she felt at first perplexed, then astonished, and, being in a good position for judging of men, she ended by thinking him a man of profound tact and discretion.

For the countess this was a great distinction; but it was not all, and the moment was perhaps come when she might think D'Aiguillon a man of heart.

We have seen that the marshal, in all his conversations with Madame Dubarry, had never touched upon the subject of his nephew's acquaintance with Mademoiselle Lange.

This silence, from a man accustomed, as the old duke was, to say the most difficult things in the world, had much surprised and even alarmed the countess. She therefore impatiently awaited Monsieur d'Aiguillon's arrival, to know how to conduct herself, and to ascertain whether the marshal had been discreet or merely ignorant.

The duke entered, respectful, but at the same time easy, and sufficiently master of himself to draw the distinction in his salutation between the reigning sultana and the court lady. By this discriminating tact he instantly gained a protectress quite disposed to find good perfect, and perfection wonderful.

Monsieur d'Aiguillon then took his uncle's hand, and the latter, advancing towards the countess, said in his most insinuating voice:

“The Duke d'Aiguillon, madame. It is not so much my nephew as one of your most ardent servants whom I have the honour to present to you.”

The countess glanced at the duke as the marshal spoke, and looked at him like a woman, — that is to say, with eyes which nothing can escape. But she saw only two heads bowing respectfully before her, and two faces erect, serene, and calm after the salutation was over.

“I know, marshal, that you love the duke,” said the countess. “You are my friend. I shall request Monsieur d'Aiguillon, therefore, in deference to his uncle, to imitate him in all that will be agreeable to me.”

“That is the conduct I had traced out beforehand for myself, madame,” said D'Aiguillon, with another bow.

“You have suffered much in Brittany?” asked the countess.

“Yes, madame, and it is not yet over,” replied D'Aiguillon.

“I believe it is, monsieur; besides, there is Monsieur de Richelieu, who will be a powerful assistance to you.”

D'Aiguillon looked at Richelieu as if surprised.

“Ah,” said the countess, “I see that the marshal has

not yet had time to have any conversation with you. That is very natural, as you have just arrived from a journey. Well, you must have a thousand things to say to each other, and I shall therefore leave you, marshal, for the present. My lord duke, pray consider yourself at home here."

So saying, the countess retired, but she did not proceed far. Behind the boudoir there opened a large closet filled with all sorts of fantastic baubles with which the king was very fond of amusing himself when he came to Luciennes, he preferred this closet to the boudoir, because in it one could hear all that was said in the next room. Madame Dubarry, therefore, was certain to hear the whole conversation between the duke and his nephew, and she calculated upon forming from it a correct and irrevocable opinion of the latter

But the duke was not duped, he knew most of the secrets of every royal and ministerial residence. To listen when people were speaking of him was one of his means, to speak while others were overhearing him was one of his ruses.

He determined, therefore, still joyous at the reception which D'Aiguillon had met with, to proceed in the same vein, and to reveal to the favourite, under cover of her supposed absence, such a plan of secret happiness and of lofty power complicated with intrigues as would present a double bait too powerful for a pretty woman, and above all for a court lady, to resist.

He desired the duke to be seated, and commenced:

"You see, duke, I am installed here."

"Yes, monsieur, I see it."

"I have had the good fortune to gain the favour of this charming woman, who is looked upon as a queen here, and who is one in reality."

D'Aiguillon bowed

"I must tell you, duke," continued Richelieu, "what I could not say in the open street, — that Madame Dubarry has promised me a portfolio."

"Ah!" said D'Aiguillon, "that is only your desert, monsieur."

"I do not know if I deserve it or not, but I am to have it,—rather late in the day, it is true. Then, situated as I shall be, I shall endeavour to advance your interests, D'Aiguillon."

"Thank you, monseigneur; you are a kind relative, and have often proved it."

"You have nothing in view, D'Aiguillon?"

"Absolutely nothing, except to escape being degraded from my title of duke and peer, as the parliament insist upon my being."

"Have you supporters anywhere?"

"Not one."

"You would have fallen, then, had it not been for the present circumstances?"

"I should have bit the dust, monseigneur."

"Ah! you speak like a philosopher."

"*Diable!* that is the reason I am so harsh, my poor D'Aiguillon, and address you more like a minister than an uncle."

"My uncle, your goodness penetrates me with gratitude."

"When I sent for you in such a hurry, you may be certain it was because I wished you to play an important part here. Let me see; have you reflected on the part Monsieur de Choiseul played for ten years?"

"Yes; certainly his was an enviable position."

"Enviable! Yes, enviable, when along with Madame de Pompadour he governed the king, and exiled the Jesuits; but very sad when, having quarrelled with Madame Dubarry, who is worth a hundred Pompadours, he was dismissed from office in four-and-twenty hours. You do not reply."

"I am listening, monsieur; and am endeavouring to discover your meaning."

"You like Monsieur de Choiseul's first part best, do you not?"

"Certainly."

"Well, my dear duke, I have decided upon playing this part."

D'Aiguillon turned abruptly towards his uncle:

"Do you speak seriously?" said he.

"Yes. Why not?"

"You intend to be a candidate for Madame Dubarry's favour?"

"Ah! *diable!* you proceed too fast. But I see you understand me. Yes, Choiseul was very lucky; he governed the king, and governed his favourite also. It is said he was attached to Madame de Pompadour—in fact, why not? Well, no, I cannot act the lover; your cold smile tells me plainly so. You, with your young eyes, look compassionately at my furrowed brow, my bending knees, and my withered hands, which were once so beautiful. In place of saying, when I was speaking of Choiseul's part, that I would play it, I should have said we will play it."

"Uncle!"

"No, she cannot love me, I know it; nevertheless—I may confess it to you without fear, for she will never learn it—I could have loved this woman beyond everything; but—"

D'Aiguillon frowned. "But—" said he.

"I have a splendid project," continued the marshal. "This part, which my age renders impossible for me, I will divide into two."

"Ha!" said D'Aiguillon.

"Some one of my family," continued Richelieu, "will love Madame Dubarry. *Parbleu!* a glorious chance,—such an accomplished woman!"

And Richelieu, in saying these words, raised his voice.

"You know it cannot be Fronsac. A degenerate wretch, a fool, a coward, a rogue, a gambler. Duke, will you be the man?"

"I?" cried D'Aiguillon; "are you mad, uncle?"

"Mad! What! you are not already on your knees before him who gives you this advice? What! you do not bound

with joy? You do not burn with gratitude? You are not already out of your senses with delight at the manner in which she received you? You are not yet mad with love? Go, go!" cried the old marshal; "since the days of Alcibiades there has been but one Richelieu in the world, and I see there will be no more after him."

"My uncle," replied the duke, with much agitation, either feigned, and in that case it was admirably counterfeited, or real, for the proposition was sudden, "my uncle, I perceive all the advantage you would gain by the position of which you speak; you would govern with the authority of Monsieur de Choiseul, and I should be the lover who would constitute that authority. The plan is worthy of the cleverest man in France, but you have forgotten one thing in projecting it."

"What!" cried Richelieu, uneasily, "is it possible you do not love Madame Dubarry? Is that it?—fool!—triple fool!—wretch!—is that it?"

"Ah! no, that is not it, my dear uncle," cried D'Aiguillon, as if he knew that not one of his words was lost; "Madame Dubarry, whom I scarcely know, seems to me the most charming of women. I should, on the contrary, love Madame Dubarry madly, I should love her only too well; that is not the question."

"What is it, then?"

"This, monseigneur. Madame Dubarry will never love me, and the first condition of such an alliance is love. How do you imagine the beautiful countess could distinguish among all the gentlemen of this brilliant court—surrounded as she is by the homage of so much youth and beauty—how should she distinguish one who has no merit, who is already no longer young, who is overwhelmed with sorrows, and who hides himself from all eyes because he feels that he will soon disappear forever? My uncle, if I had known Madame Dubarry in the period of my youth and beauty, when women admired in me all that is lovable in a man, then she might have given me a place in her

memory. That would have been much. But now there is no hope, — neither past, nor present, nor future. No, uncle, we must renounce this chimera. You have pierced my heart by presenting it to me in such bright and glowing colours."

During this tirade, which was delivered with a fire which Molé might have envied, and Lekain would have thought worthy of imitation, Richelieu bit his lips, muttering to himself:

"Has the man guessed that the countess is listening? *Peste!* he is a clever dog; he is a master of his craft. In that case, I must take care."

Richelieu was right; the countess was listening, and every word D'Aiguillon spoke sunk deep into her heart. She eagerly drank in the charm of this confession, and appreciated his exquisite delicacy in not betraying the secret of their former intimacy to his nearest confidant, for fear of throwing a shadow over a perhaps still dearly cherished portrait.

"Then you refuse?" said Richelieu.

"Oh! as for that, yes, my uncle, for unfortunately I see it is impossible."

"But try, at least, unfortunate that you are!"

"And how?"

"You are here one of us,—you will see the countess every day; please her, *morbleu!*"

"With an interested aim? Never! If I should be so unfortunate as to please her with this unworthy view, I should flee to the end of the world, for I should be ashamed of myself."

Richelieu scratched his chin.

"The thing is settled," said he to himself, "or D'Aiguillon is a fool."

All at once a noise was heard in the courtyard, and several voices cried out, "The king!"

"*Diable!*" cried Richelieu, "the king must not see me here; I shall make my escape."

"And I?" said the duke.

"It is different with you; he must see you. Remain; and, for God's sake, do not throw the handle after the axe."

With these words Richelieu stole out by the back-stairs, saying, as he left the room, —

"Adieu till to-morrow."

CHAPTER LXXXVII.

THE KING DIVIDES THE SPOILS.

WHEN the Duke d'Aiguillon was left alone, he felt at first somewhat embarrassed. He had perfectly understood all his uncle had said to him — perfectly understood that Madame Dubarry was listening — perfectly understood, in short, that, for a clever man, it was necessary in this conjuncture, to seem a man of heart, and to play alone that part in which the old marshal sought to obtain a share.

The king's arrival luckily interrupted the explanation which must have resulted from the puritanical declaration of Monsieur d'Aiguillon.

The marshal was not a man to remain long a dupe, nor above all, one who would make another's virtue shine with exaggerated brilliancy at the expense of his own.

But, being left alone, D'Aiguillon had time to reflect.

The king had in truth arrived. Already his pages had opened the door of the antechamber, and Zamore had darted towards the monarch, begging for bonbons — a touching familiarity which Louis, when he was in a bad temper, punished by sundry fillips on the nose or boxes on the ears, both exceedingly disagreeable to the young African.

The king installed himself in the Chinese cabinet; and what convinced D'Aiguillon that Madame Dubarry had not lost a word of his conversation with his uncle, was the fact that he, D'Aiguillon, overheard the entire interview between Madame Dubarry and the king.

His Majesty seemed fatigued, like a man who has raised an immense weight. Atlas was less enfeebled when his

day's work was done, and when he had held the world suspended on his shoulders for twelve hours.

Louis XV. allowed his favourite to thank, applaud, and caress him, and tell him the whole particulars of Monsieur de Choiseul's departure, which amused him exceedingly.

Then Madame Dubarry ventured. It was fair weather for politics; and besides, she felt herself strong enough at that moment to have raised one of the four quarters of the world.

“Sire,” said she, “you have destroyed, that is well; you have demolished, that is superb; but now you must think about rebuilding.”

“Oh! it is done,” said the king, carelessly.

“You have a ministry!”

“Yes.”

“What! all at once, without breathing?”

“See what it is to want common sense. Oh!—woman that you are!—before sending away your cook, must you not, as you said the other day, have a new one in readiness?”

“Repeat to me that you have formed the cabinet.”

The king raised himself upon the immense sofa on which he was lying rather than sitting, using the shoulders of the beautiful countess for his principal cushion.

“One would think, Jeannette,” said he, “to hear you making yourself so uneasy, that you know my ministry, and wish to find fault with them, or propose another.”

“Well,” said the countess, “that would not be so absurd as you seem to imagine.”

“Indeed? Then you have a ministry?”

“You have one, have you not?” replied she.

“Oh! it is my place to have one, countess. Let me see your candidates.”

“By no means; tell me yours.”

“Most willingly, to set you the example.”

“In the first place, then, who have you for the navy, where that dear Monsieur de Praslin was?”

"Ah! something new, countess; a charming man, who has never seen the sea."

"Who is it?"

"'Pon honour, it is a splendid idea. I shall make myself very popular, and I shall be crowned in the most distant seas — in effigy, of course."

"But who, sire? Who is it?"

"I would wager you do not guess in a thousand attempts. It is a member of parliament, my dear; the first president of the parliament of Besançon."

"Monsieur de Boynes?"

"The same. *Peste!* how learned you are! You know all these people!"

"I cannot help it; you talk parliament to me the whole day. Why, the man would not know an oar if he saw it."

"So much the better. Monsieur de Praslin knew his duties too well, and made me pay dearly for all his naval constructions."

"Well, the finance department, sire?"

"Oh! that is a different affair; I have chosen a special man."

"A financier?"

"No; a soldier. The financiers have crushed me too long already."

"Good heavens! And the war department?"

"Do not be uneasy; for that I have chosen a financier, Terray. He is a terrible scrutiniser of accounts! He will find errors in all Monsieur de Choiseul's additions. I may tell you that I had some idea of putting a wonderful man in the war department — every inch a man, as they say. It was to please the philosophers."

"Good. But who? Voltaire?"

"Almost. The Chevalier de Muy — a Cato."

"Oh heaven! You alarm me."

"It was all arranged. I had sent for the man, his commission was signed, he had thanked me, when my good or my evil genius — judge which — prompted me to ask him to come to Luciennes this evening to sup and chat with us."

“Fie! Horrible!”

“Well, countess, that was exactly what De Muy replied.”

“He said that to you?”

“Expressed in other words, countess. He said that his most ardent wish was to serve the king, but as for serving Madame Dubarry, it was impossible.”

“Well, that was polite of your philosopher.”

“You must know, countess, I held out my hand to him — for his brevet, which I tore in pieces with a most patient smile, and the chevalier disappeared. Louis XIV. would have let the rascal rot in one of those ugly dens in the Bastille; but I am Louis XV., and I have a parliament which gives me the whip, in place of my giving it to the parliament. Ha!”

“No matter, sire,” said the countess, covering her royal lover with kisses, “you are not the less a clever man.”

“That is not what the world in general says. Terray is execrated.”

“Who is not? And for foreign affairs?”

“That honest fellow, Bertin, whom you know.”

“No.”

“Then whom you do not know.”

“But, among them all, I cannot find one good minister.”

“So be it; now tell me yours.”

“I will only tell you one.”

“You dare not tell me; you are afraid.”

“The marshal.”

“The marshal? What marshal?” said the king, making a wry face.

“The Duke de Richelieu.”

“That old man? That chicken-hearted wretch?”

“Good! The conqueror of Mahon a chicken-hearted wretch!”

“That old debauchee?”

“Sire, your companion,”

“An immoral man, who frightens all the women.”

“That is only since he no longer runs after them.”

"Do not speak to me of Richelieu; he is my raw-head-and-bloody-bones. The conqueror of Mahon took me into all the gaming-houses in Paris. We were lampooned. No! no!—Richelieu! The very name puts me beside myself."

"You hate them so much?"

"Whom?"

"The Richelieus."

"I abhor them."

"All?"

"All. What a worthy duke and peer Monsieur Fronsac makes. He has deserved the rack twenty times."

"I give him up; but there are more Richelieus in the world than he."

"Ah! yes; D'Aiguillon."

"Well?"

The reader may judge if, at these words, the ears of the nephew were not strained in the boudoir.

"I ought to hate him more than all the others, for he hounds all the bawlers in France upon me; and yet—it is a weakness which I cannot conquer—he is bold and does not displease me."

"He is a man of spirit!" cried the countess.

"A brave man, and zealous in the defence of the royal prerogative. He is a model of a peer!"

"Yes, yes—a hundred times, yes! Make something of him."

The king looked at the countess and folded his arms.

"What, countess! Is it possible that you propose such a thing to me, when all France demands that I should exile and degrade this man?"

Madame Dubarry folded her arms in her turn.

"Just now," said she, "you called Richelieu chicken-hearted—the name belongs more properly to yourself."

"Oh, countess!"

"You are very proud because you have dismissed Monsieur de Choiseul."

"Well, it was not an easy task."

"You have done it, and you have done well ; but you are afraid of the consequences."

"I!"

"Of course. What do you accomplish by sending away Monsieur de Choiseul?"

"Give the parliament a kick in the seat of honour."

"And you will not give them two ? *Diable !* Raise both your feet—one after the other, be it understood. The parliament wished to keep Choiseul ; you send him away. They want to send away D'Aiguillon ; keep him."

"I do not send him away."

"Keep him — improved and considerably enlarged."

"You want an office for this firebrand ?"

"I want a recompense for him who defended you at the risk of his position and fortune."

"Say of his life, for he will be stoned some fine morning, along with your friend Maupeou."

"You would encourage your defenders very much, if they could only hear you."

"They pay me back with interest, countess."

"Do not say so ; facts contradict you in this case."

"Ah, well ! But why this eagerness for D'Aiguillon ?"

"Eagerness ! I do not know him ; I have seen and spoken to him to-day for the first time."

"Ah ! that is a different affair. Then it is from conviction of his merit — and I respect conviction in others, because I never have it myself."

"Then give Richelieu something in D'Aiguillon's name, since you will not give D'Aiguillon anything in his own."

"Richelieu ? nothing ! Never, never, never !"

"Then something to Monsieur d'Aiguillon, since you refuse Richelieu ?"

"What ! give him a portfolio ! That is impossible at present."

"I understand that ; but after some time, perhaps. Remember that he is a man of resources and action, and that with Terray, D'Aiguillon, and Maupeou you will have the

countess in his ear, as she went close to him that she might speak in a low tone, and she drew him to the table.

That evening Monsieur d'Aiguillon had a right to consider himself fortunate; for he had obtained his uncle's portfolio, and had eaten from the king's dish.

CHAPTER LXXXVIII.

THE ANTECHAMBERS OF THE DUKE DE RICHELIEU.

MONSIEUR DE RICHELIEU, like all the courtiers, had an hotel at Versailles, one at Paris, a house at Marly, and another at Luciennes ; a residence, in short, near each of the palaces or residences of the king.

Louis XIV. when he multiplied his places of residence so much, had imposed on all men of rank — on all those privileged to attend at the grand and little receptions and levées, the obligation of being very rich, that they might keep pace at once with the splendour of his household, and the flights of his whims.

At the period of the disgrace of Messieurs de Choiseul and De Praslin, Monsieur de Richelieu was living in his house at Versailles ; and it was there that he returned after having presented his nephew to Madame Dubarry at Luciennes.

Richelieu had been seen in the forest of Marly with the countess, he had been seen at Versailles after the minister's disgrace, his long and secret audience at Luciennes was known ; and this, with the indiscretions of Jean Dubarry, was sufficient for the whole court to think themselves obliged to go and pay their respects to Monsieur de Richelieu.

The old marshal was now going in his turn to inhale that delightful incense of praises, flatteries, and caresses, which every interested person offered without discrimination to the idol of the day.

Monsieur de Richelieu, however, was far from expecting all that was to happen to him ; but he rose that morning

with the firm resolution of closing his nostrils against the incense, as Ulysses closed his ears with wax against the songs of the sirens. The result which he expected could not be known until next day, when the nomination of the new minister would be announced by the king himself.

Great was the marshal's surprise therefore, when he awoke, or rather, was awakened by the loud noise of carriages, to hear from his valet that the court-yards of the hotel, as well as the ante-rooms and salons, were filled with visitors.

"Oh!" said he, "it seems I make some noise already."

"It is still early, my lord marshal," said his valet-de-chambre, seeing the duke's haste in taking off his night-cap.

"Henceforward," replied the duke, "there will be no such word as early for me, remember that."

"Yes, sir."

"What did you reply to the visitors?"

"That you were not up yet."

"Nothing more?"

"Nothing more."

"That was exceedingly stupid. You should have added that I was late up last night, or better still, you should have — let me see, where is Rafté?"

"Monsieur Rafté is asleep," said the valet.

"What! asleep! let him be called, the wretch!"

"Well," said a fresh and smiling old man, who appeared at the door, "here is Rafté; what is he wanted for?"

All the duke's bombast ceased at these words.

"Ah! I was certain that you were not asleep."

"And if I had been asleep, where would have been the wonder? It is scarcely daylight."

"But, my dear Rafté, you see that I do not sleep."

"That is another thing, you are a minister — how should you sleep?"

"Oh! now you are going to scold me," said the marshal, making a wry face before the glass; "are you not satisfied?"

“I! What benefit is it to me? You will fatigue yourself to death and then you will be ill. The consequence will be that I shall have to govern the state, and that is not so amusing, sir.”

“How old you are getting, Rafté!”

“I am just four years younger than yourself, monsieur. Yes, I am getting old.”

The marshal stamped with impatience.

“Did you come through the antechambers?” asked he.

“Yes.”

“Who is there?”

“All the world.”

“What do they speak of?”

“Every one is telling what favours he is going to ask from you.”

“That is very natural. But what did you hear about my appointment?”

“Oh! I would much rather not tell you that.”

“What! Criticisms already?”

“Yes, and from those who have need of your assistance! What will they say, monsieur, whose assistance you need?”

“Ah! Rafté,” said the old man, affecting to laugh, “those who would say you flatter me —”

“Well, sir,” said Rafté, “why the devil did you harness yourself to this wagon called a ministry? Are you tired of living and of being happy?”

“My dear fellow, I have tasted everything but that.”

“*Corbleu!* you have never tasted arsenic! Why do you not take some in your chocolate, from curiosity?”

“Rafté, you are an idle dog; you think that, as my secretary, you will have more work, and you shrink — you confessed as much, indeed.”

The marshal dressed himself with care.

“Give me a military air,” said he to his valet, “and hand me my military orders.”

“It seems we are in the war department?” said Rafté.

“Good heavens! yes. It seems we are there.”

"Oh! But I have not seen the king's appointment," continued Rafté; "it is not confirmed yet."

"The appointment will come in good time, no doubt."

"Then, *no doubt* is the official word to-day?"

"You become more disagreeable, Rafté, as you get older. You are a formalist, and superstitiously particular. If I had known that, I would not have allowed you to deliver my inauguration speech at the Académie; that made you pedantic."

"But listen, monseigneur; since we are in the government, let us be regular. This is a very odd affair."

"What is odd?"

"Monsieur the Count de la Vaudraye, whom I met just now in the street, told me that nothing had yet been settled about the ministry."

Richelieu smiled.

"Monsieur de la Vaudraye is right," said he. "But have you already been out, then?"

"Pardieu! I was obliged. This cursed noise of carriages awoke me; I dressed, put on my military orders also, and took a turn in the town."

"Ah! Monsieur Rafté makes merry at my expense."

"Oh! monseigneur, God forbid. But—"

"But what?"

"On my walk, I met some one."

"Whom?"

"The secretary of the Abbé Terray."

"Well?"

"Well! he told me that his master was appointed to the war department."

"Oh! ho!" said Richelieu, with his eternal smile.

"What does monseigneur conclude from this?"

"That if Monsieur Terray is appointed to the war department, I am not; that if he is not, I may perhaps be."

Rafté had satisfied his conscience; he was a bold, indefatigable, ambitious man, as clever as his master, and much better armed than he, for he knew himself to be of low

origin and dependent, two defects in his coat of mail which for forty years he had exercised all his cunning, strength, and acuteness to obviate. When Rafté saw his master so confident, he believed he had nothing more to fear.

“Come, monseigneur,” said he, “make haste; do not oblige them to wait too long; that would be a bad commencement.”

“I am ready; but tell me once more who is there?”

“Here is the list.”

He presented a long list to his master, who saw with increasing satisfaction the names of the first among the nobility, the law, and the finance.

“Suppose I should be popular, hey, Rafté?”

“We are in the age of miracles,” replied the latter.

“Ha! Taverney!” said the marshal, continuing to peruse the list. “What does he come here for?”

“I have not the least idea, monsieur; but come, make your entrée,” and the secretary, with an authoritative air, almost pushed his master into the grand salon.

Richelieu ought to have been satisfied; his reception might have contented the ambition of a prince of the blood royal. But the refined cunning and craft which characterised the period, and particularly the class of society we are speaking of, only too well assisted Richelieu’s unlucky star, which had such a disagreeable contretemps in store for him.

From propriety and respect for etiquette, all this crowded levée abstained from pronouncing the word minister before Richelieu; some were bold enough to venture as far as the word congratulation, but they knew that they must pass quickly over the word, and that Richelieu would scarcely reply to it.

For one and all, this morning visit was a simple demonstration of respect, a mere expression of good-will; for at this period such almost imperceptible shades of distinction were frequently understood and acted upon by the general mass of the community. There were certain of the courtiers

who even ventured, in the course of conversation, to express some wish, desire, or hope.

The one would have wished, he said, to have his government rather nearer Versailles; and it gratified him to have an opportunity of speaking on the subject to a man of such great influence as Monsieur de Richelieu.

Another said he had been three times forgotten by Monsieur de Choiseul in the promotions of the knights of the order, and he reckoned upon Monsieur de Richelieu's obliging memory to refresh the king's, now that there existed no obstacle in the way of his Majesty's good-will. In short, a hundred requests more or less grasping, but all veiled by the highest art, were preferred to the delighted ears of the marshal.

Gradually the crowd retired; they wished, as they said, to leave the marshal to his *important occupations*.

One man alone remained in the salon; he had not approached as the others had; he had asked for nothing; he had not even presented himself.

When the courtiers had gone, this man advanced towards the duke with a smile upon his lips.

"Ah! Monsieur de Taverney!" said the marshal; "I am enchanted to see you, truly enchanted."

"I was waiting, duke, to pay you my compliments, and to offer you my sincere congratulations."

"Ah! indeed? and for what?" replied Richelieu, for the cautious reserve of his visitors had imposed upon him the necessity of being discreet, and even mysterious.

"On your new dignity, duke."

"Hush, hush!" said the marshal, "let us not speak of that; nothing is settled; it is a mere rumour."

"Nevertheless, my dear marshal, there are many people of my opinion, for your salons were full."

"In truth, I do not know why."

"Oh! I know very well."

"Why, then? Why?"

"One word from me."

"What word?"

"Yesterday I had the honour of paying my respects to the king at Trianon. His Majesty spoke to me of my children, and ended by saying: 'You know Monsieur de Richelieu, I think; pay your compliments to him.'"

"Ah! his Majesty said that?" replied Richelieu, with a glow of pride, as if these words had been the official brevet, the destination of which Rafté doubted, or at least deplored its delay.

"So that," continued Taverney, "I soon suspected the truth; in fact, it was not difficult to do so, when I saw the eagerness of all Versailles; and I hastened to obey the king by paying my compliments to you, and to gratify my own feelings by reminding you of our old friendship."

The duke had now reached a pitch of intoxication; it is a defect in our nature from which the highest minds cannot always preserve themselves. He saw in Taverney only one of those expectants of the lowest order—poor devils who have fallen behind on the road of favour, who are useless even as *protégés*, useless as acquaintances, and who are reproached with coming forth from their obscurity, after a lapse of twenty years, to warm themselves at the sun of another's prosperity.

"I see what you are aiming at," said the marshal, harshly; "you have some favour to ask of me."

"You have said it, duke."

"Ah!" grumbled Richelieu, seating himself on, or rather plumping into, the sofa.

"I told you I had two children," continued Taverney, pliant and cunning, for he perceived the coolness of his great friend, and therefore only advanced the more eagerly: "I have a daughter whom I love very dearly, and who is a model of virtue and beauty; she is placed with madame the dauphiness, who has been condescending enough to grant her her particular esteem. Of my beautiful Andrée, therefore, I need not speak to you. Her path is smoothed; her fortune is made. Have you seen my daughter? Did

I not once present her to you somewhere? Have you not heard of her?"

"Pshaw!—I don't know," said Richelieu, carelessly, "perhaps so."

"No matter," pursued Taverney, "there is my daughter settled. For my own part, I want nothing; the king grants me a pension upon which I can live. I confess I would like to have some emolument to enable me to rebuild Maison-Rouge, where I wish to end my days, and with your interest and my daughter's—"

"Ha!" thought Richelieu, who until now had not listened, so lost was he in contemplation of his grandeur, but whom the words, "my daughter's interest," had roused from his reverie. "Oh, ho! your daughter! Why, she is a young beauty who annoys our good countess; she is a little scorpion who is sheltering herself under the wings of the dauphiness, in order to bite some one at Luciennes. Come, I will not be a bad friend; and as for gratitude, this dear countess who has made me a minister shall see if I am wanting in time of need." Then aloud:

"Proceed," said he to the Baron de Taverney in a haughty tone.

"Faith, I am near the end," replied the latter, promising himself to laugh in his sleeve at the vain marshal if he could only get what he wanted from him. "I am anxious, therefore, only about my son Philip, who bears a lofty name, but who will never be able to support it worthily unless some one assists him. Philip is a bold and thoughtful youth; rather too thoughtful, perhaps, but that is the result of his embarrassed position. You know, the horse which is reined in too tightly droops its head."

"What is all this to me?" thought Richelieu, giving most unequivocal signs of weariness and impatience.

"I want some one," continued Taverney, remorselessly, "some one in authority like yourself, to procure a company for Philip. Madame the dauphiness, on entering Strasburg, raised him to the rank of captain, but he still wants a hundred thousand francs to enable him to purchase a

company in some privileged regiment of cavalry. Procure that for me, my powerful friend."

"Your son," said Richelieu, "is the young man who rendered the dauphiness a service, is he not?"

"A most essential service," replied Taverney; "it was he who forced the last relay for madame the dauphiness from that Dubarry, who wanted to seize it by force."

"Oh, oh!" thought Richelieu, "that is just it; the most violent enemies of the countess. He comes at the right time, this Taverney! he advances claims which are sufficient to damn him forever."

"You do not answer, duke?" said Taverney, rather soured by the marshal's obstinate silence.

"It is perfectly impossible, my dear Monsieur de Taverney," replied the marshal, rising to show that the audience was over.

"Impossible? Such a trifle impossible? An old friend tell me that?"

"Why not? Is it any reason, because you are a friend, as you say, that you should seek to make me commit treason both against friendship and justice? You never came to see me for twenty years, for during that time I was nothing; now that I am a minister, you come."

"Monsieur de Richelieu, it is you who are unjust at this moment."

"No, my dear friend, no; I do not wish to see you dangling in my antechambers; I am a true friend, and therefore —"

"You have some reason for refusing me, then?"

"I!" exclaimed Richelieu, much alarmed at the suspicion Taverney might perhaps form; "I! a reason."

"Yes; I have enemies."

The duke might have replied what he thought, but that would have been to discover to the baron that he tried to please Madame Dubarry from gratitude, — it would have been to confess that he was the minister of the favourite; and that the marshal would not have confessed for an empire. He therefore hastily replied:

“ You have no enemy, my dear friend; but I have many. To grant requests at once, without examining claims, would expose me to the accusations of continuing the Choiseul system. My dear monsieur, I wish to leave behind some trace of my administration of affairs. For twenty years I have projected reforms, improvements, and now they shall blossom. Favouritism is the ruin of France; I will protect merit. The writings of our philosophers are bright torches, whose light has not shone for me in vain; they have dissipated all the mists of ignorance and superstition which brooded over the past, and it was full time it should be so, for the well-being of the state. I shall therefore examine your son’s claims neither more nor less than I should do those of any other citizen. I must make this sacrifice to my conscience—a grievous sacrifice, no doubt, but which, after all, is only that of one man for the benefit of three hundred thousand. If your son, Monsieur Philip de Taverney, proves that he merits my favour, he shall have it, not because his father is my friend, not because he bears the name he does, but because he is a man of merit. That is my plan of conduct.”

“ You mean your system of philosophy,” replied the old baron, biting his nails with rage, and adding to his anger by reflecting how much humiliation and how many petty cowardices this interview had cost him.

“ Philosophy, if you will, monsieur; it is a noble word.”

“ Which dispenses good things, marshal, does it not?”

“ You are a bad courtier,” said Richelieu, with a cold smile.

“ Men of my rank are courtiers only of the king.”

“ Oh! Monsieur Rafté, my secretary, has a thousand of your rank in my antechambers every day,” replied Richelieu; “ they generally come from some obscure den or other in the provinces, where they have learned to be rude to their pretended friends while they preach concord.”

“ Oh! I am well aware that a Maison-Rouge, a title which dates from the crusades, does not understand concord so well as a Vignerol fiddler.”

The marshal had more tact than Taverney. He could have had him thrown out of the windows, but he only shrugged his shoulders and replied:—

“You are rather behind the time, most noble scion of the crusades; you only remember the calumnious memoir presented by parliament in 1720, and have not read that of the peers and dukes in reply. Be kind enough to walk into my library, my dear monsieur; Rafté will give it to you to read.”

As he was bowing his antagonist out with this apt repartee, the door opened, and a man entered noisily, crying:—

“Where is my dear duke?”

This man, with ruddy visage, eyes dilated with satisfaction, and joyous air, was neither more nor less than Jean Dubarry.

On seeing this new-comer, Taverney started back with surprise and vexation.

Jean saw the movement, recognised the face, and turned his back.

“I understand,” said the baron, quietly, “and I shall retire. I leave the minister in most distinguished company.”

And he left the room with dignity.

CHAPTER LXXXIX.

RICHELIEU IS DISABUSED.

FURIOUS at this extremely provoking exit, Jean made two steps after the baron; then, returning to the marshal, he said, shrugging his shoulders:—

“You receive such people here?”

“Oh! my dear monsieur, you mistake; on the contrary, I send such people away.”

“Do you know who this gentleman is?”

“Alas! Yes.”

“No, but do you know really?”

“He is a Taverney.”

“He is a man who wishes to make his daughter the king’s favourite—”

“Oh, come!”

“A man who wishes to supplant us, and who takes all possible means to do so. But Jean is there, and Jean has his eyes about him.”

“You think he wishes—”

“It is a very difficult matter to see what he wishes, is it not? One of the dauphin’s party, my dear monsieur,— and they have their little stabber, too.”

“Bah!”

“A young man, who looks quite ready to fly at people’s throats; a bully, who pinks Jean’s shoulder, — poor Jean !”

“Yours? Is it a personal enemy of yours, my dear count?” asked Richelieu, feigning surprise.

“Yes; he was my adversary in that affair of the relay, you know.”

"Indeed! What a strange sympathy. I did not know that, and yet I refused all his demands; only, if I had known, I should not only have refused him, but kicked him out. But do not be uneasy, count, I have now this worthy bully under my thumb, and he shall find it out to his cost."

"Yes, you can cure him of his taste for attacking people on the highway. For, in fact — Ha! by-the-bye, I have not yet congratulated you."

"Why, yes, count; it seems the affair is definitively settled."

"Oh! it is all completed. Will you permit me to embrace you?"

"With all my heart."

"Faith, there was some trouble; but the trouble is nothing when you succeed. You are satisfied, are you not?"

"Shall I speak frankly? Yes; for I think I can be useful."

"No doubt of that. But it is a bold stroke; there will be some growling."

"Am I not liked by the public?"

"You? Why, there is no question of you, either one way or other; it is he who is execrated."

"He?" said Richelieu, with surprise; "who? he?"

"Of course," interrupted Jean. "Oh! the parliament will revolt, it will be a second edition of the flagellation of Louis XIV. They are whipped, duke, they are whipped."

"Explain."

"Why, it explains itself. The parliament, of course, hate the author of their persecutions."

"Ah! you think that?"

"I am certain of it, as all France is. No matter, duke, it was a capital stroke of you to send for him that way, just at the very heat of the affair."

"Whom? Whom, count? I am on thorns, I do not understand one word of what you say."

“Why, I speak of Monsieur d’Aiguillon, your nephew.”

“Well! what then?”

“Well, I say it was well-advised of you to send for him.”

“Ah! very good, very good. You mean to say he will assist me?”

“He will assist us all. Do you know he is on the best terms with little Jeanne?”

“Oh! indeed?”

“On the best terms. They have already had a chat together, and understand each other perfectly, as it seems to me.”

“You know that?”

“It is plain enough. Jeannette is the laziest little dormouse in existence.”

“Ah!”

“And she never rises before nine, ten, or eleven o’clock.”

“Yes! what of that?”

“Well, this morning it was not later than six o’clock when I saw D’Aiguillon’s carriage leave.”

“Six o’clock!” cried Richelieu, laughing.

“Yes!”

“In the morning, this morning?”

“In the morning, this morning. You can judge that, to be up in time for so early an audience, Jeanne must be very fond of your dear nephew.”

“Yes, yes,” said Richelieu, rubbing his hands. “Six o’clock; bravo, D’Aiguillon.”

“The audience must have begun at five o’clock, — actually in the night; it is miraculous.”

“It is miraculous,” repeated the marshal, “miraculous, indeed, my dear Jean.”

“And so there you are all three, like Orestes and Pylades, with the addition of another Pylades.”

At this moment, and as the marshal was rubbing his hands with great glee, D’Aiguillon entered the salon.

The nephew saluted his uncle with an air of condolence

which was sufficient to enable Richelieu, without understanding the whole truth, at least to guess the greatest part of it.

He turned pale as though he had received a mortal wound. It flashed across his mind that at court there exist neither friends nor relatives, and that every one seeks only his own aggrandisement.

“I was a great fool !” thought he. “Well, D’Aiguillon ?” continued he aloud, repressing a deep sigh.

“Well, marshal ?”

“It is a heavy blow to the parliament,” said Richelieu, repeating Jean’s words.

D’Aiguillon blushed.

“You know it ?” said he.

“The count has told me all,” replied Richelieu; “even your late stay at Luciennes last night. Your appointment is a triumph for my family.”

“Be assured, marshal, of my extreme regret.”

“What the devil does he mean by that ?” said Jean, folding his arms.

“Oh, we understand each other,” interrupted Richelieu; “we understand each other.”

“That is a different affair; but for my part I do not understand you. Regret ! Ah ! yes, because he will not be recognised as minister immediately, — yes, yes, I see.”

“Oh ! there will be an interim ?” said the marshal, feeling a ray of hope — that constant guest in the heart of the ambitious man and the lover — once more dawn in his breast.

“Yes, marshal, an interim.”

“But, in the mean time,” cried Jean, “he is tolerably well paid; the finest command in Versailles.”

“Ah ! a command ?” said Richelieu, pierced by a new wound.

“Monsieur Dubarry perhaps exaggerates a little,” said the Duke d’Aiguillon.

“But in one word, what is this command ?”

“The king’s light horse.”

Richelieu again felt his furrowed cheeks grow pale.

“Oh! yes,” said he, with a smile which it would be impossible to describe; “yes, it is indeed a trifling appointment for such a charming man. But what can you expect, duke,—the loveliest woman in the world, were she even the king’s favourite, can only give what she has.”

It was now D’Aiguillon’s turn to grow pale.

Jean was scrutinising the beautiful Murillos which adorned Richelieu’s walls.

Richelieu slapped his nephew on the shoulder.

“Luckily,” said he, “you have the promise of approaching advancement. Accept my congratulations, duke,—my sincere compliments. Your address, your cleverness in negotiations, is only equalled by your good fortune. Adieu; I have some business to transact. Do not forget me in the distribution of your favours, my dear minister.”

D’Aiguillon only replied:—

“Your interests and mine, monseigneur, are henceforth one and the same.”

And, saluting his uncle, he left the room with the dignity which was natural to him; thus escaping from one of the most embarrassing positions he had ever experienced in a life strewn with so many difficulties.

“An admirable trait in D’Aiguillon’s character,” said Richelieu, the moment the former had disappeared, to Jean, who was rather at a loss to know what to think of this exchange of politeness between the nephew and uncle, “and one that I admire particularly, is his artlessness. He is at once frank and high-spirited; he knows the court, and is withal as simple-minded as a girl.”

“And then he loves you so well!” said Jean.

“Like a lamb.”

“Oh,” said Jean, “he is more like your son than Monsieur de Fronsac.”

“By my faith, yes, count; by my faith, yes.”

Whilst replying thus Richelieu kept walking round his chair in great agitation; he sought but could not find.

"Ah, countess," he muttered, "you shall pay me for this!"

"Marshal," said Jean, with a cunning look, "we four will realise that famous fagot of antiquity; you know, the one that could not be broken."

"We four, my dear Monsieur Jean! how do you understand that?"

"My sister as power, D'Aiguillon as authority, you as advice, and I as vigilance."

"Very good! very good!"

"And now let them attack my sister; I defy them all."

"*Pardieu!*" said Richelieu, whose brain was boiling.

"Let them set up rivals now!" exclaimed Jean, in ecstasies with his plans and his visions of triumph.

"Oh!" said Richelieu, striking his forehead.

"Well, my dear marshal, what is the matter?"

"Nothing! I think your idea of a league admirable."

"Is it not?"

"And I enter body and soul into your plans."

"Bravo!"

"Does Taverney live at Trianon with his daughter?"

"No, he lives in Paris."

"The girl is very handsome, my dear count."

"If she were as beautiful as Cleopatra or — my sister, I do not fear her, now that we are leagued together."

"You said Taverney lives in Paris, in the Rue St. Honoré, I think?"

"I did not say Rue St. Honoré; it is the Rue Coq-Héron in which he lives. Have you any plan of chastising these Taverneys, that you ask?"

"Yes, count, I think I have found a capital plan."

"You are an incomparable man, but I must leave you now; I wish to see what they say in town."

"Adieu, then, count. Apropos, you have not told me who the new ministers are."

"Oh, mere birds of passage: Terray, Bertin, and I know not who else. Mere counters in the hands of D'Aiguillon,

the real minister, though his appointment is deferred for a short time."

"Perhaps indefinitely adjourned," thought the marshal, directing his most gracious smile to Jean as an affectionate adieu.

Jean retired, Rafté entered. He had heard all, and knew how to conduct himself; all his suspicions were now realised. He did not utter a word to his master, he knew him too well. He did not even call the *valet-de-chambre*; he assisted him with his own hands to undress, and conducted him to his bed, in which the old marshal, shivering with fever, immediately buried himself, after taking a pill which his secretary made him swallow.

Rafté drew the curtains and retired. The ante-chamber was thronged with eager listening valets. Rafté took the head valet aside.

"Attend to the marshal carefully," said he, "he is ill. He has had a serious vexation this morning; he was obliged to disobey the king."

"Disobey the king!" exclaimed the alarmed valet.

"Yes, his Majesty sent a portfolio to monseigneur, but as he was aware that he owed it to the solicitations of the Dubarry, he refused. Oh! it was a noble resolve, and the Parisians ought to build him a triumphal arch; but the shock was great, and our master is ill. Look to him carefully!"

After these words, whose circulating power he knew beforehand, Rafté returned to his closet.

A quarter of an hour afterwards all Versailles was informed of the noble conduct and lofty patriotism of the marshal, who in the mean time slept soundly upon the popularity his secretary had gained for him.

CHAPTER XC.

THE DAUPHIN'S FAMILY REPAST.

THE same day, about three o'clock, Mademoiselle Taverney left her apartment to attend upon the dauphiness, who was in the habit of being read to for a short time before dinner.

The abbé who had held the post of first reader to her Royal Highness no longer exercised his functions, as, for some time previous, ever since certain diplomatic intrigues in which he had displayed a very great talent for business, he had employed himself entirely in important political affairs.

Mademoiselle Taverney therefore set out, dressed as well as circumstances would permit, to fulfil her office. Like all the guests at Trianon, she still suffered considerable inconvenience from the rather sudden installation in her new abode, and had not yet been able to arrange her furniture, or make the necessary provisions for establishing her modest household. She had therefore, on the present occasion, been assisted in her toilet by one of the *femmes-de-chambre* of Madame de Noailles, that starched lady of honour whom the dauphiness nicknamed Madame Etiquette.

Andrée was dressed in a blue silk robe, with long waist, which fitted admirably to her slender figure. This robe opened in front, and displayed beneath a muslin skirt relieved with three falls of embroidery. Short sleeves, also of muslin, embroidered in the same manner as the dress, and festooned and tapering to the shoulder, were admirably in keeping with a habit shirt, worked *à la paysanne*, which modestly concealed her neck and shoulders.

Her beautiful hair, which fell in long and luxuriant ringlets upon her shoulders, was simply tied with a ribbon of the same colour as her dress, a mode of arrangement which harmonised infinitely better with the noble, yet modest and retiring air of the lovely young girl, and with her pure and transparent complexion never yet sullied by the touch of rouge, than the feathers, ornaments, and laces which were then in vogue.

As she walked, Andrée drew on a pair of white silk mittens upon the slenderest and roundest fingers in the world, while the tiny points of her high-heeled shoes of pale blue satin left their traces on the gravel of the garden walk.

When she reached the pavilion of Trianon, she was informed that the dauphiness was taking a turn in the grounds with her architect and her head gardener. In the apartment of the first story overhead she could hear the noise of a turning-lathe with which the dauphin was making a safety-lock for a coffer which he valued very highly.

In order to rejoin the dauphiness Andrée had to cross the parterre, where, notwithstanding the advanced period of the season, flowers carefully covered through the night raised their pale heads to bask in the setting rays of a sun even paler than themselves. And as the evening was already closing in, for in that season it was dark at six o'clock, the gardener's apprentices were employed in placing the bell-glasses over the most delicate plants in each bed.

While traversing a winding alley of evergreens clipped into the form of a hedge, bordered on each side by beds of Bengal roses, and opening on a beautiful lawn, Andrée all at once perceived one of these gardeners, who, when he saw her, raised himself upon his spade, and bowed with a more refined and studied politeness than was usual in one of his station.

She looked, and in this workman recognised Gilbert, whose hands, notwithstanding his labour, were yet white enough to excite the envy of Monsieur de Taverney.

Andrée blushed in spite of herself; it seemed to her that Gilbert's presence in this place was too remarkable a coincidence to be the result of chance.

Gilbert repeated his bow, and Andrée returned it, but without slackening her pace.

She was too upright and too courageous, however, to resist the promptings of her heart, and leave the question of her restless soul unanswered. She turned back, and Gilbert, whose cheek had already become as pale as death, and whose dark eye followed her retreating steps with a sombre look, felt as if suddenly restored to life, and bounded forward to meet her.

"You here, Monsieur Gilbert?" said Andrée, coldly.

"Yes, mademoiselle."

"By what chance?"

"Mademoiselle, one must live, and live honestly."

"But do you know that you are very fortunate?"

"Oh! yes, mademoiselle, very fortunate," said Gilbert.

"I beg your pardon; what did you say?"

"I said, mademoiselle, that I am, as you think, very fortunate."

"Who introduced you here?"

"Monsieur de Jussieu, a protector of mine."

"Ah!" said Andrée, surprised; "then you know Monsieur de Jussieu?"

"He is the friend of my first protector,—of my master, Monsieur Rousseau."

"Courage, then, Monsieur Gilbert," said Andrée, making a movement to proceed.

"Do you find yourself better, mademoiselle?" asked Gilbert, in a trembling voice.

"Better? How so?" said Andrée coldly.

"Why—the accident?"

"Oh, yes, thank you, Monsieur Gilbert, I am better; it was nothing."

"Oh!" you were nearly perishing," said Gilbert almost speechless with emotion, "the danger was terrible."

Andrée now began to think that it was high time to cut short this interview with a workman in the most public part of the royal park.

"Good-day, Monsieur Gilbert," said she.

"Will mademoiselle not accept a rose?" said Gilbert, trembling, and the drops of perspiration standing on his forehead.

"But, monsieur," replied Andrée, "you offer me what is not yours to give."

Gilbert, surprised and overwhelmed by this reply, could not utter a word. His head drooped, but as he saw Andrée looking at him with something like a feeling of joy at having manifested her superiority, he drew himself up, tore a branch covered with flowers from the finest of the rose-trees, and began to pull the roses to pieces with a coolness and dignity which surprised and startled the young girl.

She was too just and too kind-hearted not to see that she had gratuitously wounded the feelings of an inferior who had unthinkingly committed a breach of propriety. But like all proud natures who feel themselves in the wrong, she preserved silence when perhaps an apology or a reparation was hovering upon her lips.

Gilbert added not a word either; he threw away the branch and resumed his spade; but his character was a mixture of pride and cunning, and whilst stooping to his work, he kept his eye stealthily fixed on Andrée's retreating figure. At the end of the walk she could not help looking round. She was a woman.

This weakness was sufficient for Gilbert; he said to himself that in this last struggle he had been victorious.

"She is weaker than I am," thought he, "and I shall govern her. Proud of her beauty, of her name, of her advancing fortunes, indignant at my love, which she perhaps suspects, she is only the more an object of adoration to the poor working-man who trembles while he looks at her. Oh! this trembling, this emotion, unworthy of a man! Oh! these acts of cowardice which she makes me commit,

she shall one day repay me for them all! But to-day I have worked enough," added he; "I have conquered the enemy. I, who ought to have been the weakest, since I love, have been a hundred times stronger than she."

He repeated these words once more with a wild burst of joy, as he convulsively dashed back the dark hair from his thoughtful brow. Then he stuck his spade deep into the flower-bed, bounded through the hedge of cypress and yew-tree with the speed of a roebuck, and, light as the wind, threaded a parterre of plants under bell-glasses, not one of which he touched, notwithstanding the furious rapidity of his career, and posted himself at the extremity of a turn, which he had reached, by describing a diagonal course, before Andrée, who followed the winding of the path.

From his new position he saw her advancing, thoughtful and almost humbled, her lovely eyes cast down, her moist and motionless hand gently rustling her dress as she walked. Concealed behind the thick hedge, Gilbert heard her sigh twice as if she were speaking to herself. At last she passed so close to the trees which sheltered him that had he stretched out his arm he might have touched hers, as a mad and feverish impulse prompted him to do.

But he knit his brow with an energetic movement almost akin to hatred, and, placing his trembling hand upon his heart:

"Coward again!" said he to himself. Then he added softly, "But she is so beautiful!"

Gilbert might have remained for a considerable time sunk in contemplation, for the walk was long and Andrée's step was slow and measured, but this walk was crossed by others, from which some troublesome visitor might at any moment make his appearance, and fate treated Gilbert so scurvily that a man did in fact advance from the first alley upon the left—that is to say, almost opposite the clump of evergreens behind which he was concealed.

This intruder walked with a methodic and measured step; he carried his head erect, held his hat under his right arm,

and his left hand resting upon his sword. He wore a velvet coat underneath a pelisse lined with sable fur, and pointed his foot as he walked, which he did with the easy grace of a man of high rank and breeding.

This gentleman as he advanced perceived Andrée, and the young girl's figure evidently pleased him, for he quickened his pace and crossed over in an oblique direction, so as to reach as soon as possible the path on which Andrée was walking, and intercept her course.

When Gilbert perceived this personage, he involuntarily gave a slight cry, and took to flight like a startled lapwing. The intruder's manœuvre was successful; he was evidently accustomed to it, and in less than three minutes he was in advance of Andrée, whom three minutes before he had been following at some distance.

When Andrée heard his footstep behind her she moved aside a little to let the man pass, and when he had passed she looked at him in her turn. The gentleman looked also, and most eagerly; he even stopped to see better, and, returning after he had seen her features:

“Ah! mademoiselle,” said he, in a very kind voice; “whither are you hastening so quickly, may I ask?”

At the sound of this voice Andrée raised her head, and saw about twenty paces behind her two officers of the guards following slowly; she spied a blue ribbon peeping from beneath the sable pelisse of the person who addressed her, and pale and startled at this unexpected rencontre, and at being accosted thus graciously, she said, bending very low:

“The king!”

“Mademoiselle — ” replied Louis XV., approaching her; “excuse me, I have such bad eyes that I am obliged to ask your name.”

“Mademoiselle de Taverney,” stammered the young girl, so confused and trembling that her voice was scarcely audible.

“Oh! yes; I remember. I esteem myself fortunate in meeting you in Trianon, mademoiselle,” said the king.

"I was proceeding to join her Royal Highness the dauphiness, who expects me," said Andrée, trembling more and more.

"I will conduct you to her, mademoiselle," replied Louis XV, "for I am just going to pay a visit to my daughter in my quality of country neighbour. Be kind enough to take my arm, as we are proceeding in the same direction."

Andrée felt a cloud pass before her eyes, and the blood flow in tumultuous waves to her heart. In fact, such an honour for the poor girl as the king's arm, the sovereign lord of all France, such an unlooked-for, incredible piece of good-fortune, a favour which the whole court might envy, seemed to her more like a dream than a reality.

She made such a deep and reverential curtsey that the king felt himself obliged to bow a second time. When Louis XV was inclined to remember Louis XIV., it was always in matters of ceremonial and politeness. Such traditions, however, dated further back, and were handed down from Henry IV.

He offered his hand therefore to Andrée, who placed the burning points of her fingers upon the king's glove, and they both continued to advance towards the pavilion, where they had been informed that the dauphiness with her architect and her head gardener would be found.

We can assure the reader that Louis XV, although not particularly fond of walking, chose the longest road to conduct Andrée to the little Trianon. Although the king was apparently unaware of his error, the two officers who walked behind perceived it but too plainly, and bemoaned themselves bitterly, as they were lightly clad and the weather was cold.

They arrived too late to find the dauphiness where they had expected, as Marie Antoinette had just set out for Trianon, that she might not keep the dauphin waiting, for he liked to sup between six and seven o'clock.

Madame the dauphiness arrived therefore at the exact

hour, and as the punctual dauphin was already upon the threshold of the salon, that he might lose no time in reaching the dining-room the moment the *maître d'hôtel* appeared, the dauphiness threw her mantle to a *femme-de-chambre*, took the dauphin's arm with a winning smile, and drew him into the dining-room.

The table was laid for the two illustrious hosts. They occupied each the centre of the table, so as to leave the place of honour vacant, which, since several unexpected visits of the king, was never occupied in his Majesty's absence, even when the room was filled with guests.

At this end of the table, the king's cover and *cadenas* occupied a considerable space; but the *maître d'hôtel*, not calculating upon it being occupied this evening, was conducting the service on this side.

Behind the dauphiness's chair, leaving the necessary space between for the valets to pass, was stationed Madame de Noailles, stiff and upright, and yet wearing as amiable an expression on her features as she could conjure up for the festive occasion.

Near Madame de Noailles were some other ladies, whose position at the court gave them the right, or merited the privilege, of being present at the supper of their Royal Highnesses.

Three times a week Madame de Noailles supped at the same table with the dauphin and dauphiness; but on the days when she did not sup with them, she would not for anything in the world have missed being present. Besides, it was a delicate mode of protesting against the exclusion of the four days out of seven.

Opposite the Duchess de Noailles, surnamed by the dauphiness Madame Etiquette, was the Duke de Richelieu, on a raised seat very similar to her own.

He was also a strict observer of forms; but his etiquette was undistinguishable to a casual observer, being always veiled beneath the most perfect elegance and sometimes beneath the wittiest raillery.

The result of this antithesis between the first gentleman of the bedchamber and the first lady of honour of the dauphiness was that the conversation, always dropped by the Duchess de Noailles, was incessantly renewed by Monsieur de Richelieu.

The marshal had travelled through all the courts of Europe, and had adopted the tone of elegance in each which was best suited to his character; so that, from his admirable tact and propriety, he knew exactly what anecdotes to relate at the table of the youthful couple, and what would be suitable to the private suppers of Madame Dubarry.

Perceiving this evening that the dauphiness had a good appetite, and that the dauphin was voracious, he concluded that they would give no heed to the conversation going on around them, and that he had consequently only to make Madame de Noailles suffer an hour of purgatory in anticipation.

He began therefore to speak of philosophy and theatrical affairs, a two-fold subject of conversation doubly obnoxious to the venerable duchess. He related the subject of one of the last philanthropic sallies of the philosopher of Ferney, the name already given to the author of the "Henriade," and when he saw the duchess on the tenterhooks, he changed the text and detailed all the squabbles and disputes which, in his office of gentleman of the chamber, he had to undergo in order to make the actresses in ordinary to the king play more or less badly.

The dauphiness loved the arts, and above all the theatre; she had sent a complete costume for Clytemnestra to Mademoiselle Raucourt, and she therefore listened to Monsieur de Richelieu not only with indulgence, but with pleasure.

Then the poor lady of honour, in violation of all etiquette, was forced to fidget on her bench, blow her nose noisily, and shake her venerable head, without thinking of the cloud of powder which at each movement fell upon her

forehead, like the cloud of snow which surrounds the summit of Mont Blanc at every gust of the north wind.

But it was not enough to amuse the dauphiness — the dauphin must also be pleased. Richelieu abandoned the subject of the theatre, for which the heir to the crown had never displayed any great partiality, to discourse of humanity and philosophy. When he spoke of the English, he did so with all the warmth and energy which Rousseau displays in drawing the character of Edward Bromston.

Now Madame de Noailles hated the English as much as she did the philosophers. To admit a new idea was a fatiguing operation for her, and fatigue deranged the economy of her whole person. Madame de Noailles, who felt herself intended by nature for a conserver, growled at all new ideas like a dog at a frightful mask.

Richelieu, in playing this game, had a double end in view; he tormented Madame Etiquette, which evidently pleased the dauphiness, and he threw in, here and there, some virtuous apothegm, some axiom in mathematics, which was rapturously received by the dauphin, the royal amateur of exact sciences.

He was paying his court, therefore, with great skill and address, and from time to time directing an eager glance towards the door, as if he expected some one who had not yet arrived, when a cry from the foot of the staircase echoed along the arched corridors, was repeated by two valets stationed at regular intervals from the entrance door, and at last reached the dining-salon:

“The king!”

At this magic word Madame de Noailles started bolt upright from her seat, as if moved by a spring; Richelieu rose more slowly, and with easy grace; the dauphin hastily wiped his mouth with his napkin, and stood up before his seat, his face turned towards the door.

As for the dauphiness, she hastened towards the staircase to meet the king, and do the honours of her mansion to him.

CHAPTER XCI.

THE QUEEN'S HAIR.

THE king still held Mademoiselle de Taverney by the hand when they reached the landing-place, and it was only on arriving there that he bowed to her, so courteously and so low, that Richelieu had time to see the bow, to admire its grace, and to ask himself to what lucky mortal it was addressed.

His ignorance did not last long. Louis XV. took the arm of the dauphiness, who had seen all that passed, and had already perfectly recognised Andrée.

“My daughter,” said he, “I come without ceremony to ask you for my supper. I crossed the entire park in my way hither, and happening to meet Mademoiselle de Taverney, requested her to accompany me.”

“Mademoiselle de Taverney!” murmured Richelieu, almost dizzy at this unexpected stroke. “On my faith, I am almost too fortunate !”

“I shall not only be not angry with mademoiselle, who is late,” replied the dauphiness graciously, “but I have to thank her for bringing your Majesty to us.”

Andrée, whose cheeks were dyed with as deep a red as the ripe and tempting cherries which graced the epergne in the centre of the table, bowed without replying.

“*Diable! diable!* she is indeed beautiful,” thought Richelieu; “and that old scoundrel Taverney said no more for her than she deserves.”

The king had already taken his seat at the table after having saluted the dauphin. Gifted like his grandfather

with an obliging appetite, the monarch did justice to the improvised supper which the *maître d'hôtel* placed before him as if by magic. But while eating, the king, whose back was turned towards the door, seemed to seek something, or rather some one.

In fact, Mademoiselle de Taverney, who enjoyed no privilege, as her position in the dauphiness's household was not yet fixed, had not entered the dining-room, and after her profound reverence in reply to the king's salutation, had returned to the dauphiness's apartment, lest her services might be required, as they had been once or twice already, to read to her Highness after she had retired to bed.

The dauphiness saw that the king was looking for the beautiful companion of his walk.

"Monsieur de Coigny," said she to a young officer of the guards who was standing behind the king, "pray request Mademoiselle de Taverney to come up; with Madame de Noailles' permission, we will discard etiquette for this evening."

Monsieur de Coigny left the room, and almost immediately afterwards returned, introducing Andrée, who, totally at a loss to comprehend the reason for such a succession of unusual favours, entered trembling.

"Seat yourself there, mademoiselle," said the dauphiness, "beside Madame de Noailles."

Andrée mounted timidly on the raised seat, but she was so confused that she had the audacity to seat herself only about a foot distant from the lady of honour. She received, in consequence, such a terrific look that the poor child started back at least four feet, as if she had come in contact with a Leyden jar highly charged.

The king looked at her and smiled.

"Ah! *ça*," said the duke to himself, "it is scarcely worth my while to meddle with the affair; everything is progressing of itself."

The king turned and perceived the marshal, who was quite prepared to meet his look.

"Good-day, duke," said Louis; "do you agree well with the Duchess de Noailles?"

"Sire," replied the marshal, "the duchess always does me the honour to treat me as a madcap."

"Oh! Were you also on the road to Chanteloup, duke?"

"I, sire! Faith, no; I am too grateful for the favours your Majesty has showered on my family."

The king did not expect this blow; he was prepared to rally, but he found himself anticipated.

"What favours have I showered, duke?"

"Sire, your Majesty has given the command of your light horse to the Duke d'Aiguillon."

"Yes; it is true, duke."

"And that is a step which must have put all the energy, all the skill of your Majesty to the task. It is almost a *coup-d'état*."

The meal was now over; the king waited for a moment, and then rose from table.

The conversation was taking an embarrassing turn, but Richelieu was determined not to let go his prey. Therefore, when the king began to chat with Madame de Noailles, the dauphiness, and Mademoiselle de Taverney, Richelieu manœuvred so skilfully that he soon found himself in the full fire of a conversation which he directed according to his pleasure.

"Sire," said he, "your Majesty knows that success emboldens."

"Do you say so for the purpose of informing us that you are bold, duke?"

"Sire, it is for the purpose of requesting a new favour from your Majesty, after the one the king has already deigned to grant. One of my best friends, an old servant of your Majesty, has a son in the gendarmes; the young man is highly deserving, but poor. He has received from an august princess the brevet title of captain, but he has not yet got the company."

"The princess ? my daughter ?" asked the king, turning towards the dauphiness.

"Yes, sire," said Richelieu, "and the father of this young man is called the Baron de Taverney."

"My father !" involuntarily exclaimed Andrée, "Philip ! Is it for Philip, monseigneur, that you are asking for a company ?"

Then, ashamed of this breach of etiquette, Andrée made a step backwards, blushing, and clasping her hands with emotion.

The king turned to admire the blush which mantled on the cheek of the lovely girl, and then glanced at Richelieu with a pleased look, which informed the courtier how agreeable his request had been.

"In truth," said the dauphiness, "he is a charming young man, and I had promised to make his fortune. How unfortunate princes are ! When God gives them the best intentions, he deprives them of the memory and reasoning powers necessary to carry their intentions into effect. Ought I not to have known that this young man was poor, and that it was not sufficient to give him the epaulette without at the same time giving him the company ?"

"Oh, madame ! how could your Royal Highness have known that ?"

"Oh, I knew it !" replied the dauphiness, quickly, with a gesture which recalled to Andrée's memory the modest but yet happy home of her childhood ; "yes, I knew it, but I thought I had done everything necessary in giving a step to Monsieur Philip de Taverney. He is called Philip, is he not, mademoiselle ?"

"Yes, madame."

The king looked round on these noble and ingenuous faces, and then rested his gaze on Richelieu, whose face was also brightened by a ray of generosity, borrowed doubtless from his august neighbour.

"Duke," said he, in a low voice, "I shall embroil myself with Luciennes."

Then, addressing Andrée, he added quickly :

“ Say that it will give you pleasure, mademoiselle.”

“ Ah ! sire,” said Andrée, clasping her hands, “ I request it as a boon from your Majesty.”

“ In that case, it is granted,” said Louis. “ You will choose a good company for this young man, duke ; I will furnish the necessary funds, if the charges are not already paid and the post vacant.”

This good action gladdened all who were present. It procured the king a heavenly smile from Andrée, and Richelieu a warm expression of thanks from those beautiful lips, from which, in his youth, he would have asked for even more.

Several visitors arrived in succession, amongst whom was the Cardinal de Rohan, who since the installation of the dauphiness at Trianon had paid his court assiduously to her.

But during the whole evening the king had kind looks and pleasant words only for Richelieu. He even commanded the marshal's attendance, when, after bidding farewell to the dauphiness, he set out to return to his own Trianon. The old marshal followed the king with a heart bounding with joy.

While the king, accompanied by the duke and his two officers, gained the dark alleys which lead from the palace, the dauphiness had dismissed Andrée.

“ You will be anxious to write this good news to Paris, mademoiselle,” said the princess ; “ you may retire.”

And preceded by a footman carrying a lantern, the young girl traversed the walk of about a hundred paces in length which separates Trianon from the offices.

Also, in advance of her, concealed by the thick foliage of the shrubbery, bounded a shadowy figure which followed all her movements with sparkling eyes. It was Gilbert.

When Andrée had arrived at the entrance, and begun to ascend the stone staircase, the valet left her and returned to the antechambers of Trianon.

Then Gilbert, gliding into the vestibule, reached the court-yard, and climbed by a small staircase as steep as a ladder into his attic, which was opposite Andrée's windows and was situated in a corner of the building.

From this position he could see Andrée call a *femme-de-chambre* of Madame de Noailles to assist her, as that lady had her apartments in the same corridor. But when the girl had entered the room, the window-curtains fell like an impenetrable veil between the ardent eyes of the young man and the object of his wishes.

At the palace there now only remained Monsieur de Rohan, redoubling his gallant attentions to the dauphiness, who received them but coldly.

The prelate, fearing at last to be indiscreet, inasmuch as the dauphin had already retired, took leave of her Royal Highness with the expression of the deepest and most tender respect. As he was entering his carriage, a waiting-woman of the dauphiness approached, and almost leaned inside the door.

“Here,” said she.

And she put into his hand a small paper parcel, carefully folded, the touch of which made the cardinal start.

“Here,” he replied hastily, thrusting into the girl’s hand a heavy purse, the contents of which would have been a handsome salary. Then, without losing time, the cardinal ordered the coachman to drive to Paris, and to ask for fresh orders at the barrier. During the whole way, in the darkness of the carriage, he felt the paper, and kissed the contents like some intoxicated lover. At the barrier he cried, “Rue St. Claude.” A short time afterwards he crossed the mysterious courtyard, and once more found himself in the little salon occupied by Fritz, the silent usher.

Balsamo kept him waiting about a quarter of an hour. At last he appeared, and gave as a reason for his delay the lateness of the hour, which had prevented him from expecting the arrival of visitors.

In fact, it was now nearly eleven o'clock at night.

"That is true, baron," said the cardinal; "and I must request you to excuse my unseasonable visit. But you may remember you told me one day, that to be assured of certain secrets —"

"I must have a portion of the person's hair of whom we were speaking on that day," interrupted Balsamo, who had already spied the little paper which the unsuspecting prelate held carelessly in his hand.

"Precisely, baron."

"And you have brought me this hair, monseigneur; very well."

"Here it is. Do you think it would be possible to return it to me again after the trial?"

"Unless fire should be necessary; in which case —"

"Of course, of course," said the cardinal. "However, I can procure some more. Can I have a reply?"

"To-day?"

"You know I am impatient."

"I must first ascertain, monseigneur."

And Balsamo took the packet of hair, and hastily mounted to Lorenza's apartment.

"I shall now know," said he, on the way, "the secret of this monarchy,—the mysterious fate which destiny has in store for it!"

And from the other side of the wall, even before opening the secret door, he plunged Lorenza into the magnetic sleep. The young girl received him therefore with an affectionate embrace. Balsamo could scarcely extricate himself from her arms. It would be difficult to say which was the most grievous for the poor baron, the reproaches of the beautiful Italian when she was awake, or her caresses when she slept. When he had succeeded in loosening the chain which her snowy arms formed around his neck:

"My beloved Lorenza," said he, putting the paper in her hand, "can you tell me to whom this hair belongs?"

Lorenza took it and pressed it against her breast, and

then to her forehead. Though her eyes were open, it was only by means of her head and breast that she could see in her sleep.

"Oh!" said she, "it is an illustrious head from which this hair has been taken."

"Is it not?—and a happy head too? Speak."

"She may be happy."

"Look well, Lorenza."

"Yes, she may be happy; there is no shadow as yet upon her life."

"Yet she is married."

"Oh!" Lorenza sighed softly.

"Well, what? what is my Lorenza going to say?"

"She is married, dear Balsamo," added the young woman, "and yet—"

"And yet?"

"And yet—"

Lorenza sighed again.

"I also am married," said she.

"Doubtless!"

"And yet—"

Balsamo looked at Lorenza in astonishment; despite the young woman's sleep, a modest blush was spreading over her face.

"And yet?" repeated Balsamo. "Finish."

Again she threw her arms around her lover's neck, and hiding her face on his breast:

"And yet I am a maiden still," said she.

"And this woman, this princess, this queen," cried Balsamo, "married, indeed, as she is—"

"This woman, this princess, this queen," repeated Lorenza, "she is as pure, as chaste, as I myself; nay, purer, more chaste, for she does not love as I do."

"Oh, fate!" said Balsamo. "Thanks, Lorenza, I know all I wished to know."

He embraced her, put the hair carefully into his pocket, and then, cutting a lock off the Italian's black tresses, he

burnt it at the wax-light and enclosed the ashes in the paper which had been wrapped round the hair of the dauphiness.

Then he left the room, and whilst descending the stairs he awoke the young woman.

The prelate, agitated and impatient, was waiting and doubting.

“Well, count ?” said he.

“Well, monseigneur, the oracle has said you may hope.”

“It said so !” exclaimed the prince, transported with joy.

“Draw what conclusion you please, monseigneur ; the oracle said that this woman did not love her husband.”

“Oh !” said Monsieur de Rohan, with a thrill of joy.

“I was obliged to burn the hair to obtain the revelation by its essence. Here are the ashes, which I restore to you most scrupulously, after having gathered them up as if each atom were worth a million.”

“Thanks, sir, a thousand thanks ; I can never repay you.”

“Do not speak of that, monseigneur. I must recommend you, however, not to swallow these ashes in wine, as lovers sometimes do ; it causes such a dangerous sympathy that your love would become incurable, while the lady's heart would cool towards you.”

“Oh ! I shall take care,” said the prelate, almost terrified.
“Adieu, count, adieu.”

Twenty minutes afterwards his Eminence's carriage crossed Monsieur de Richelieu's at the corner of the Rue des Petits Champs so suddenly, that it was nearly upset in a deep trench which had been dug for the foundation of a new building.

The two noblemen recognized each other.

“Ha ! prince,” said Richelieu with a smile.

“Ha ! duke,” replied Louis de Rohan, with his finger upon his lips.

And they disappeared in opposite directions.

CHAPTER XCII.

MONSIEUR DE RICHELIEU APPRECIATES NICOLE.

MONSIEUR DE RICHELIEU drove straight to Monsieur de Taverney's modest hotel in the Rue Coq-Héron.

Thanks to the privilege we possess, in common with the devil on two sticks, of entering every house, be it ever so carefully locked, we are aware before Monsieur de Richelieu that the baron was seated before the fireplace, his feet resting upon the immense andirons which supported a smouldering log, and was lecturing Nicole, sometimes pausing to chuck her under the chin, in spite of the rebellious and scornful poutings of the young waiting-maid. But whether Nicole would have been satisfied with the caress without the sermon, or whether she would have preferred the sermon without the caress, we can give no satisfactory information.

The conversation between the master and the servant turned upon the very important point, that at a certain hour of the evening Nicole never came when the bell was rung; that she had always something to do in the garden or in the greenhouse; and that everywhere but in these two places she neglected her business.

Nicole, turning backwards and forwards with a charming and voluptuous grace, replied :

“ So much the worse ! I am dying with weariness here ; you promised I should go to Trianon with mademoiselle.”

It was thereupon that the baron thought it proper in charity to pat her cheeks and chuck her chin, no doubt to distract her thoughts from dwelling on so unpleasant a sub-

ject; but Nicole continued in the same vein, and, refusing all consolation, deplored her unhappy lot.

“Yes,” sighed she, “I am shut up within four horrible walls; I have no company; I have no air; whilst I had the prospect of a pleasant and fortunate future before me.”

“What prospect?” said the baron.

“Trianon,” replied Nicole; “Trianon, where I should have seen the world — where I should have looked about me — where I should have been looked at.”

“Oh! oh! my little Nicole,” said the baron.

“Well, monsieur, I am a woman, and as well worth looking at as another, I suppose?”

“*Cordieu!* how she talks!” said the baron to himself. “What fire! what ambition! Would that I were young and rich!”

And he could not help casting a look of admiration at so much youth and beauty. Nicole seemed at times thoughtful and impatient.

“Come, monsieur,” said she, “will you retire to bed, that I may go to mine?”

“One word more, Nicole.”

All at once the noise of the street-bell made Taverney start and Nicole jump.

“Who can be coming,” said the baron, “at half-past eleven o’clock at night? Go, child, and see.”

Nicole hastened to open the door, asked the name of the visitor, and left the street-door half open. Through this lucky opening a shadow, which had apparently emerged from the courtyard, glided out, not without making noise enough to attract the attention of the marshal, for it was he who turned and saw the flight. Nicole preceded him, candle in hand, with a beaming look.

“Oh! oh!” said the marshal, smiling, and following her into the room, “this old rogue of a Taverney only spoke to me of his daughter.”

The duke was one of those men who do not require a second glance to see, and see completely. The shadowy

figure which he had observed escaping made him think of Nicole, and Nicole of the shadow. When he saw her pretty face, he guessed what errand the shadow had come upon, and, judging from her saucy and laughing eye, her white teeth, and small waist, he drew a tolerably correct picture of her character and tastes.

At the door of the salon, Nicole, not without a palpitation of the heart, announced :

“ His Eminence the Duke de Richelieu.”

This name was destined to cause a sensation that evening. It produced such an effect upon the baron, that he rose from his arm-chair and walked straight to the door, not being able to believe the evidence of his ears.

But before he reached the door, he perceived Monsieur de Richelieu in the shadow of the corridor.

“ The duke ! ” he stammered.

“ Yes, my dear friend, the duke himself,” replied Richelieu, in his kindest manner. “ Oh ! that surprises you, after your visit the other day ? Well, nevertheless, nothing can be more real. In the mean time, your hand, if you please.”

“ Monseigneur, you overwhelm me.”

“ Where have your wits fled to, my dear friend ? ” said the old marshal, giving his hat and cane to Nicole, and seating himself comfortably in an arm-chair ; “ you are getting rusty, you dote ; you seem no longer to know the world ! ”

“ But yet, duke,” replied Taverney, much agitated, “ it seems to me that the reception you gave me the other day was so significant that I could not mistake its purport.”

“ Hark ye, my old friend,” answered Richelieu, “ the other day you behaved like a school-boy and I like a pedant. Between us there was only the difference of the ferula. You are going to speak — I will save you the trouble ; you might very probably say some very foolish things to me, and I might reply in the same vein. Let us leave the other day aside, therefore, and come direct to the present time. Do you know what I have come for this evening ? ”

"No, certainly."

"I have come to bring you the company which you asked me for your son the other day, and which the king has granted. *Diable!* can you not understand the difference? The day before yesterday I was a quasi-minister, and to ask a favour was an injustice; but to-day, when I am simply Richelieu and have refused the portfolio, it would be absurd not to ask; I have therefore asked and obtained, and I now bring it to you."

"Duke, can this be true? And is this kindness on your part—?"

"It is the natural consequence of my duty as your friend. The minister refused, Richelieu asks and gives."

"Ah, duke, you enchant me — you are a true friend!"

"*Pardieu!*"

"But the king — the king, who confers such a favor on me —"

"The king scarcely knows what he has done; or perhaps I am mistaken, and he knows very well."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that his Majesty has, no doubt, some motive for provoking Madame Dubarry just now; and you owe this favor which he bestows upon you more to that motive than to my influence."

"You think so?"

"I am certain of it, for I am aiding and abetting. You know it is on account of this creature that I refused the portfolio?"

"I was told so, but —"

"But you did not believe it. Come, say it frankly."

"Well, I confess that —"

"You always thought me not likely to be troubled by many scruples of conscience — is that it?"

"At least, that I thought you without prejudices."

"My friend, I am getting old, and I no longer care for pretty faces except when they can be useful to me. And besides I have some other plans. But to return to your son; he is a splendid fellow!"

"But on bad terms with that Dubarry who was at your house when I had the folly to present myself."

"I am aware of it, and that is why I am not a minister."

"Oh! you refused the portfolio in order not to displease my son?"

"If I told you so you would not believe me. No, that is not the reason. I refused it because the requirements of the Dubarrys, which commenced with the exclusion of your son, would have ended in enormities of all kinds."

"Then you have quarrelled with these creatures?"

"Yes and no. They fear me—I despise them; it is tit for tat."

"It is heroic, but imprudent."

"Why?"

"The countess has still some power."

"Pooh!" said Richelieu.

"How you say that!"

"I say it like a man who feels the weakness of his position, and who, if necessary, would place the miner in a good position to blow up the whole place."

"I see the true state of the case; you do my son a favor partly to vex the Dubarrys."

"Principally for that reason, and your perspicacity is not at fault. Your son serves me as a grenade; I shall cause an explosion by his means. But, *apropos*, baron, have you not also a daughter?"

"Yes."

"Young,—lovely as Venus,—and who lives at present at Trianon?"

"Ah! then you know her?"

"I have spent the evening in her company, and have conversed about her for a full hour with the king."

"With the king?" cried Taverney, his cheeks in a flame. "The king has spoken of my daughter,—of Mademoiselle Andrée de Taverney?"

"The king himself, my friend. Do I vex you in telling you this?"

"Vex me? No, certainly not. The king honours me by looking at my daughter; but—the king—"

"Is immoral; is that what you were going to say?"

"Heaven forbid that I should talk evil of his Majesty! He has a right to adopt whatever morals he chooses."

"Well, what does this astonishment mean, then? Do you pretend to say that Mademoiselle Andrée is not an accomplished beauty, and that therefore the king may not have looked upon her with admiration?"

Taverney did not reply; he only shrugged his shoulders and fell into a reverie, during which the unrelenting inquisitorial eye of the Duke de Richelieu was still fixed upon him.

"Well, I know what you would say, if, instead of thinking to yourself, you would speak aloud," continued the old marshal, approaching his chair nearer the baron's. "You would say that the king is accustomed to bad society, that he mixes with low company, and that therefore he is not likely to admire this noble girl, so modest in her demeanour, and so pure and lofty in her ideas, and is not capable of appreciating the treasures of her grace and beauty."

"Certainly you are a great man, duke; you have guessed my thoughts exactly," said Taverney.

"But confess, baron," continued Richelieu, "that our master should no longer force us gentlemen, peers and companions of the King of France, to kiss the vile, open hand of a creature like Dubarry. It is time that he should restore us to our proper position. After having sunk from La Chateauroux, who was a marquise, and of stuff to make duchesses, to La Pompadour, who was the daughter and the wife of a farmer of the public revenues, and from La Pompadour to the Dubarry, who calls herself simply Jeanneton, may he not fall still farther and plunge us into the lowest pitch of degradation? It is humiliating for us, baron, who wear a coronet on our caps, to bow the head before such trumpery creatures."

"Oh! you only speak the truth," said Taverney. "How evident is it that the court is deserted on account of these new fashions!"

"No queen, no ladies; no ladies, no courtiers. The king elevates a grisette to the rank of a consort, and the people are upon the throne, represented by Mademoiselle Jeanne Vaubernier, a sempstress of Paris."

"It is so, and yet—"

"You see, then, baron," interrupted the marshal, "what a noble career there is open for a woman of mind who should reign over France at present."

"Without doubt," said Taverney, whose heart was beating fast; "but unluckily the place is occupied."

"For a woman," continued the marshal, "who would have the boldness of these creatures without their vice, and who would direct her views and calculations to a loftier aim. For a woman who would advance her fortune so high, that she should be talked of when the monarchy itself should no longer exist. Do you know if your daughter has intellect, baron?"

"Lofty intellect, and, above all, good sense."

"She is very lovely."

"Is she not?"

"Her beauty is of that soft and charming character which pleases men so much, while her whole being is stamped with that air of candour and virgin purity which imposes respect even upon women. You must take great care of that treasure, my old friend."

"You speak of her with such fire—"

"I! I am madly in love with her, and would marry her to-morrow were I twenty instead of seventy-four years of age! But is she comfortably placed? Has she the luxury which befits such a lovely flower? Only think, baron! this evening she returned alone to her apartments, without waiting-women or lackey. A servant of the dauphin carried a lantern before her. That looks more like a servant than a lady of her rank."

"What can I do, duke? you know I am not rich."

"Rich or not, your daughter must at least have a waiting-maid."

Taverney sighed.

"I know very well," said he, "that she wants one, or at least that she ought to have one."

"Well, have you none?"

The baron did not reply.

"Who is that pretty girl you had here just now?" continued Richelieu. "A fine, spirited-looking girl, i'faith."

"Yes; but—I—I cannot send her to Trianon."

"Why not, baron? On the contrary, she seems to me perfectly suited for the post; she would make a capital *femme-de-chambre*."

"You did not look at her face, then, duke?"

"I!—I did nothing else."

"You looked at her and did not remark her strange resemblance!"

"To whom?"

"To—guess. Come hither, Nicole."

Nicole advanced; like a true waiting-woman, she had been listening at the door. The duke took her by both hands and looked her steadily in the face, but the impertinent gaze of this great lord and debauchee did not alarm or embarrass her for a moment.

"Yes," said he, "it is true; there is a resemblance."

"You know to whom, and you see, therefore, that it is impossible to expose the fortunes of our house to such an awkward trick of fate. Would it be thought agreeable that this little minx of a Nicole should resemble the most illustrious lady in France?"

"Oh, ho!" replied Nicole, sharply, and disengaging herself from the marshal's grasp, the better to reply to Monsieur de Taverney, "is it so certain that this little minx resembles this illustrious lady so exactly? Has this lady the low shoulder, the quick eye, the round ankle, and the plump arm of the little minx?"

Nicole was crimson with rage, and therefore ravishingly beautiful.

The duke once more took her pretty hands in his, and with a look full of caresses and promises:

“Baron,” said he, “Nicole has certainly not her equal at court, at least in my opinion. As for the illustrious lady to whom she has, I confess, a slight resemblance, we shall know how to spare her self-love. You have fair hair of a lovely shade, Mademoiselle Nicole; you have eyebrows and nose of a most imperial form; well, in one quarter of an hour employed before the mirror, these imperfections, since the baron thinks them such, will disappear. Nicole, my child, would you like to be at Trianon?”

“Oh!” said Nicole, and her whole soul full of longing was expressed in this monosyllable.

“You shall go to Trianon, then, my dear, and without prejudicing in any way the fortunes of others. Baron, one word more.”

“Speak, my dear duke.”

“Go, my pretty child,” said Richelieu, “and leave us alone a moment.”

Nicole retired. The duke approached the baron.

“I press you the more to send your daughter a waiting-maid, because it will please the king. His Majesty does not like poverty, and pretty faces do not frighten him. Let me alone, I understand what I am about.”

“Nicole shall go to Trianon, if you think it will please the king,” replied the baron, with a meaning smile.

“Then, if you will allow me, I will bring her with me; she can take advantage of the carriage.”

“But still, her resemblance to the dauphiness! We must think of that, duke.”

“I have thought of it. This resemblance will disappear in a quarter of an hour under Rafté’s hands, I will answer for it. Write a note to your daughter to tell her of what importance it is that she should have a *femme-de-chambre*, and that this *femme-de-chambre* should be Nicole.”

“You think it important that it should be Nicole?”

“I do.”

“And that no other than Nicole would do?”

“Upon my honour, I think so.”

“Then I will write immediately.”

And the baron sat down and wrote a letter, which he handed to Richelieu.

“And the instructions, duke?”

“I will give them to Nicole. Is she intelligent?”

The baron smiled.

“Then you confide her to me, do you not?” said Richelieu.

“That is your affair, duke; you asked me for her, I give her to you; make of her what you like.”

“Mademoiselle, come with me,” said the duke, rising, and calling into the corridor, “and that quickly.”

Nicole did not wait to be told twice. Without asking the baron for his consent, she made up a packet of clothes in five minutes, and, light as a bird, she flew down stairs and took her place beside the coachman.

Richelieu took leave of his friend, who repeated his thanks for the service he had rendered Philip. Of Andrée not a word was said; it was necessary to do more than speak of her.

CHAPTER XCIII.

THE TRANSFORMATION. .

NICOLE was overjoyed. To leave Taverney for Paris was not half so great a triumph as to leave Paris for Trianon.

She was so gracious with Monsieur de Richelieu's coachman, that the next morning the reputation of the new *femme-de-chambre* was established throughout all the coach-houses and antechambers, in any degree aristocratic, of Paris and Versailles.

When they arrived at the Hôtel de Hanover, Monsieur de Richelieu took the little waiting-maid by the hand and led her to the first story, where Monsieur Rafté was waiting his arrival, and writing a multitude of letters, all on his master's account.

Amidst the various acquirements of the marshal, war occupied the foremost rank, and Rafté had become, at least in theory, such a skilful man of war, that Polybius and the Chevalier de Fobard, if they had lived at that period, would have esteemed themselves fortunate could they have perused the pamphlets on fortifications and manœuvring, of which Rafté wrote one every week. Monsieur Rafté was busy revising the plan of a war against the English in the Mediterranean when the marshal entered, and said:

“Rafté, look at this child, will you?”

Rafté looked.

“Very pretty,” said he, with a most significant movement of the lips.

“Yes, but the likeness, Rafté. It is of the likeness I speak.”

“Oh! true. What the deuce!”

“You see it, do you not?”

“It is extraordinary; it will either make or mar her fortune.”

“It will ruin her in the first place; but we shall arrange all that. You observe she has fair hair, Rafté; but that will not signify much, will it?”

“It will only be necessary to make it black, monseigneur,” replied Rafté, who had acquired the habit of completing his master’s thoughts, and sometimes even of thinking entirely for him.

“Come to my dressing-table, child,” said the marshal; “this gentleman, who is a very clever man, will make you the handsomest and the least easily recognised waiting-maid in France.”

In fact, ten minutes afterwards, with the assistance of a composition which the marshal used every week to dye the white hairs beneath his wig black, a piece of coquetry which he often affected to confess by the bedside of some of his acquaintances, Rafté had dyed the beautiful auburn hair of Nicole a splendid jet black.

Then he passed the end of a pin, blackened in the flame of a candle, over her thick, fair eyebrows, and by this means gave such a fantastic look to her joyous countenance, such an ardent and even sombre fire to her bright, clear eyes, that one would have said she was some fairy bursting by the power of an incantation from the magic prison in which her enchanter had held her confined.

“Now, my sweet child,” said Richelieu, after having handed a mirror to the astonished Nicole, “look how charming you are, and how little like the Nicole you were just now. You have no longer ruin to fear, but a fortune to make.”

“Oh, monseigneur!” exclaimed the young girl.

“Yes; and for that purpose it is only necessary that we understand each other.”

Nicole blushed and looked down; the cunning one

expected, no doubt, some of those flattering words which Richelieu knew so well how to say.

The duke perceived this, and, to cut short all misunderstanding, said:

“Sit down in this arm-chair beside Monsieur Rafté, my dear child. Open your ears wide, and listen to me. Oh! do not let Monsieur Rafté’s presence embarrass you; do not be afraid; he will, on the contrary, give us his advice. You are listening, are you not?”

“Yes, monseigneur,” stammered Nicole, ashamed at having thus been led away by her vanity.

The conversation between Monsieur de Richelieu, Monsieur Rafté, and Nicole lasted more than an hour, after which the marshal sent the little *femme-de-chambre* to sleep with the other waiting-women in the hotel.

Rafté returned to his military pamphlet, and Richelieu retired to bed, after having looked over the different letters which conveyed to him intelligence of all the acts of the provincial parliaments against Monsieur d’Aiguillon and the Dubarry clique.

Early the next day, one of his carriages without his coat of arms conducted Nicole to Trianon, set her down at the gate with her little packet, and immediately disappeared. Nicole, with head erect, mind at ease, and hope dancing in her eyes, after having made the necessary inquiries, knocked at the door of the offices.

It was ten o’clock in the morning. Andrée, already up and dressed, was writing to her father to inform him of the happy event of the preceding day, of which Monsieur de Richelieu, as we have already seen, had made himself the messenger. Our readers will not have forgotten that a flight of stone steps led from the garden to the little chapel of Trianon; that on the landing-place of this chapel a staircase branched off towards the right to the first story, which contained the apartments of the ladies-in-waiting, which apartments opened off a long corridor, like an alley, looking upon the garden.

Andrée's apartment was the first upon the left hand in this corridor. It was tolerably large, well lighted by windows looking upon the stable court, and preceded by a little bedroom with a closet on either side. This apartment, however insufficient, if one considers the ordinary household of the officers of a brilliant court, was yet a charming retreat, very habitable, and very cheerful as an asylum from the noise and bustle of the palace. There an ambitious soul could fly to devour the affronts or the mistakes of the day, and there, too, a humble and melancholy spirit could repose in silence and in solitude, apart from the grandeur of the gay world around.

In fact, the stone steps once ascended and the chapel passed, there no longer existed either superiority, duty, or display. There reigned the calm of a convent, and the personal liberty of prison life. The slave of the palace was a monarch when she had crossed the threshold of her modest dwelling. A gentle yet lofty soul such as Andrée's found consolation in this reflection; not that she flew here to repose after the fatigues of a disappointed ambition, or of unsatisfied longings; but she felt that she could think more at her ease in the narrow bounds of her chamber than in the rich saloons of Trianon, or those marble halls which her feet trod with a timidity amounting almost to terror.

From this sequestered nook, where the young girl felt herself so well and so appropriately placed, she could look without emotion on all the splendour which, during the day, had met her dazzled eye. Surrounded by her flowers, her harpsichord, and her German books — such sweet companions to those who read with the heart — Andrée defied fate to inflict on her a single grief, or to deprive her of a single joy.

"Here," said she, when in the evening, after her duties were over, she returned to throw around her shoulders her dressing-gown with its wide folds, and to breathe with all her soul, as with all her lungs; "here I possess nearly everything I can hope to possess till my death. I may one

day perhaps be richer, but I can never be poorer than I now am. There will always be flowers, music, and a consoling page to cheer the poor recluse."

Andrée had obtained permission to breakfast in her own apartment when she felt inclined. This was a precious boon to her, for she could thus remain in her own domicile until twelve o'clock, unless the dauphiness should command her attendance for some morning reading or some early walk. Thus free, in fine weather she set out every morning with a book in her hand, and traversed alone the extensive woods which lie between Versailles and Trianon ; then, after a walk of two hours, during which she gave full play to meditation and reverie, she returned to breakfast, often without having seen either nobleman or servant, man or livery.

When the heat began to pierce through the thick foliage, Andrée had her little chamber fresh and cool, with the double current of air from the door and the window. A small sofa covered with Indian silk, four chairs to match, a simple yet elegant bed with a circular top, from which the curtains of the same material as the covering of the furniture fell in deep folds, two china vases placed upon the chimney-piece, and a square table with brass feet, composed her little world, whose narrow confines bounded all her hopes and limited all her wishes.

Andrée was seated in her apartment, therefore, as we have said, and busily engaged in writing to her father, when a little modest knock at the door of the corridor attracted her attention.

She raised her head on seeing the door open, and uttered a slight cry of astonishment when the radiant face of Nicole appeared, entering from the little antechamber.

CHAPTER XCIV.

HOW PLEASURE TO SOME IS DESPAIR TO OTHERS.

“GOOD-DAY, mademoiselle, it is I,” said Nicole, with a joyous curtsey, which nevertheless, from the young girl’s knowledge of her mistress’s character, was not unmixed with anxiety.

“You! And how do you happen to be here?” replied Andrée, putting down her pen, the better to follow the conversation which was thus commenced.

“Mademoiselle had forgotten me, so I came—”

“But if I forgot you, mademoiselle, it was because I had my reasons for so doing. Who gave you permission to come!”

“Monsieur the baron, of course, mademoiselle,” said Nicole, smoothing the handsome black eyebrows which she owed to the generosity of Monsieur Rafté with a very dissatisfied air.

“My father requires your services in Paris, and I do not require you here at all. You may return, child.”

“Oh, then, mademoiselle does not care,—I thought mademoiselle had been more pleased with me. It is well worth while loving,” added Nicole, philosophically, “to meet with such a return at last.”

And she did her utmost to bring a tear to her beautiful eyes.

There was enough of heart and feeling in this reproach to excite Andrée’s compassion.

“My child,” said she, “I have attendance here already, and I cannot permit myself unnecessarily to increase the household of the dauphiness by another mouth.”

"Oh! as if this mouth was so large!" said Nicole, with a charming smile.

"No matter, Nicole, your presence here is impossible."

"On account of this resemblance?" said the young girl.
"Then you have not looked at my face, mademoiselle?"

"In fact, you seem changed."

"I think so! A fine gentleman, he who got the promotion for Monsieur Philip, came to us yesterday, and, as he saw the baron quite melancholy at your being here without a waiting-maid, he told him that nothing was easier than to change me from fair to dark. He brought me with him, dressed me as you see, and here I am."

Andrée smiled.

"You must love me very much," said she, "since you are determined at all risks to shut yourself up in Trianon, where I am almost a prisoner."

Nicole cast a rapid but intelligent glance round the room.

"The chamber is not very gay," said she, "but you are not always in it?"

"I? Of course not," replied Andrée; "but you?"

"Well, I?"

"You, who will never enter the salons of madame the dauphiness,—you, who will have neither the resource of the theatre, nor the walk, nor the evening circle, but will always remain here,—you will die of weariness."

"Oh!" said Nicole, "there is always some little window or other; one can surely see some little glimpse of the gay world without, were it only through the chinks of the door. If a person can see, they can also be seen,—that is all I require; so do not be uneasy on my account."

"I repeat, Nicole, that I cannot receive you without express orders from my father."

"Is that your settled determination?"

"It is."

Nicole drew the Baron de Taverney's letter from her bosom.

“There,” said she, “since my entreaties and my devotion to you have had no effect, let us see if the order contained in this will have more power.”

Andrée read the letter, which was in the following terms:—

“I am aware, and indeed it is already remarked, my dear Andrée, that you do not occupy the position at Trianon which your rank imperatively requires. You ought to have two *femmes-de-chambre* and a valet, as I ought to have clear twenty thousand francs per annum; but as I am satisfied with one thousand francs, imitate my example, and content yourself with Nicole, who in her own person is worth all the servants you ought to have.

“Nicole is quick, intelligent, and devoted to you, and will readily adopt the tone and manners of her new locality. Your chief care indeed will be not to stimulate her, but to repress her anxiety. Keep her, then; and do not imagine that I am making any sacrifice in depriving myself of her services. In case you should think so, remember that his Majesty, who had the goodness to think of us, remarked on seeing you (this was confided to me by a good friend), that you required a little more attention to your toilet and general appearance. Think of this; it is of great importance.

“YOUR AFFECTIONATE FATHER.”

This letter threw Andrée into a state of grief and perplexity. She was then to be haunted, even in her new prosperity, by the remembrance of that poverty which she alone did not feel to be a fault, while all around seemed to consider it as a crime.

Her first impulse was to break her pen indignantly, to tear the letter she had commenced, and to reply to her father’s epistle by some lofty tirade expressive of philosophical self-denial, which Philip would have approved of with all his heart. But she imagined she saw the baron’s satirical smile on reading this *chef-d’œuvre*, and her resolution vanished. She merely replied to the baron’s order, therefore, by a paragraph annexed to the news of Trianon which she had already written to him according to his request.

"My father," she added, "Nicole has this moment arrived, and I receive her, since you wish it; but what you have written on this subject has vexed me. Shall I be less ridiculous with this village girl as waiting-maid than when I was alone amidst this wealthy court? Nicole will be unhappy at seeing me humbled; she will be discontented; for servants feel proud or humbled in proportion to the wealth or poverty of their masters. As to his Majesty's remark, my father, permit me to tell you that the king has too much good sense to be displeased at my incapacity to play the grand lady, and, besides, his Majesty has too much heart to have remarked or criticised my poverty without transforming it into a wealth to which your name and services would have had a legitimate claim in the eyes of all."

This was Andrée's reply, and it must be confessed that her ingenuous innocence, her noble pride, had an easy triumph over the cunning and corruption of her tempters.

Andrée said no more respecting Nicole. She agreed to her remaining, so that the latter, joyous and animated, she well knew why, prepared on the spot a little bed in the cabinet on the right of the antechamber, and made herself as small, as aerial, and as exquisite as possible, in order not to inconvenience her mistress by her presence in this modest retreat. One would have thought she wished to imitate the rose-leaf which the Persian sages let fall upon a vase filled with water to show that something could be added without spilling the contents.

Andrée set out for Trianon about one o'clock. She had never been more quickly or more gracefully attired. Nicole had surpassed herself; politeness, attention, and zeal,—nothing had been wanting in her services.

When Mademoiselle de Taverney was gone, Nicole felt herself mistress of the domicile, and instituted a thorough examination of it. Everything was scrutinised, from the letters to the smallest knick-knack on the toilet-table, from the mantelpiece to the most secret corners of the closets.

Then she looked out of the windows to take a survey of the neighbourhood.

Below her was a large courtyard, in which several ostlers were dressing and currying the splendid horses of the dauphiness. "Ostlers! pshaw!" Nicole turned away her head.

On the right was a row of windows on the same story as those of Andrée's apartment. Several heads appeared at these windows, apparently those of chambermaids and floor-scrubbers. Nicole disdainfully proceeded in her examination.

On the opposite side, in a large apartment, some music-teachers were drilling a class of choristers and instrumentalists for the mass of St. Louis. Without ceasing her dusting operations, Nicole commenced to sing after her own fashion, thus distracting the attention of the masters, and causing the choristers to sing false.

But this pastime could not long satisfy Mademoiselle Nicole's ambition. When the masters and the singers had quarrelled, and been mystified sufficiently, the little waiting-maid proceeded to the inspection of the higher story. All the windows were closed, and, moreover, they were only attics, so Nicole continued her dusting. But a moment afterwards, one of these attic windows was opened without her being able to discover by what mechanism, for no one appeared. Some person however must have opened this window; this some person must have seen Nicole, and yet not have remained to look at her, thereby proving himself a most impertinent some person. At least, such was Nicole's opinion. But she, who examined everything so conscientiously, could not avoid examining the features of this impertinent; and she therefore returned every moment from her different avocations to the window to give a glance at this attic, — that is, at this open eye from which the eyeball was so obstinately absent. Once she imagined that the person fled as she approached; but this was incredible, and she did not believe it.

On another occasion she was almost certain of the fact, having seen the back of the fugitive, surprised, no doubt, by a prompter return than he had anticipated. Then Nicole had recourse to stratagem. She concealed herself behind the curtain, leaving the window wide open to drown all suspicion.

She waited a long time, but at last a head of black hair made its appearance ; then came two timid hands, which supported, buttress-like, a body bending over cautiously ; and, finally, a face showed itself distinctly at the window. Nicole almost fell, and grasped the curtain so tightly, in her surprise, that it shook from top to bottom.

It was Monsieur Gilbert's face which was looking at her from this lofty attic. But the moment Gilbert saw the curtain move, he comprehended the trick, and appeared no more. To mend the matter, the attic window was closed.

No doubt Gilbert had seen Nicole ; he had been astonished, and had wished to convince himself of the presence of his enemy ; and when he found himself discovered instead, he had fled in agitation and in anger. At least, Nicole interpreted the scene thus, and she was right, for this was the exact state of the case.

In fact, Gilbert would rather have seen his Satanic Majesty in person than Nicole. The arrival of this spy caused him a thousand terrors. He felt an old leaven of jealousy against her, for she knew his secret of the garden in the Rue Coq-Héron.

Gilbert had fled in agitation, but not in agitation alone, but also in anger, and biting his nails with rage.

“Of what use now is my foolish discovery, of which I was so proud ?” said he to himself. “Even if Nicole had a lover in Paris, the evil is done, and she will not be sent away from this on that account ; but if she tells what I did in the Rue Coq-Héron, I shall be dismissed from Trianon. It is not I who govern Nicole,— it is she who governs me. Oh, fury !”

And Gilbert's inordinate self-love, serving as a stimulant

to his hatred, made his blood boil with frightful violence. It seemed to him that Nicole, in entering that apartment, had chased from it, with a diabolical smile, all the happy dreams which Gilbert from his garret had wafted thither every night along with his vows, his ardent love, and his flowers. Had Gilbert been too much occupied to think of Nicole before, or had he banished the subject from his thoughts on account of the terror with which it inspired him? We cannot determine; but this we do know, at least, that Nicole's appearance was a most disagreeable surprise for him.

He saw plainly that, sooner or later, war would be declared between them; but, as Gilbert was prudent and politic, he did not wish the war to commence until he felt himself strong enough to make it energetic and effective. With this intention he determined to counterfeit death until chance should present him with a favourable opportunity of reviving, or until Nicole, from weakness or necessity, should venture on some step which would deprive her of her present vantage-ground. Therefore, all eye, all ear, when Andrée was concerned, but at the same time ceaselessly vigilant, he continued to make himself acquainted with the state of affairs in the first apartment of the corridor, without Nicole ever having once met him in the gardens.

Unluckily for Nicole, she was not irreproachable, and even had she been so for the present, there was always one stumbling-block in the past over which she could be made to fall.

At the end of a week's ceaseless watching, morning, noon, and night, Gilbert at last saw through the bars of his window a plume which he fancied he recognised. This plume was a source of constant agitation to Nicole, for it belonged to Monsieur Beausire, who, following the rest of the court, had emigrated from Paris to Trianon.

For a long time Nicole was cruel; for a long time she left Monsieur Beausire to shiver in the cold, and melt in the

sun, and her prudence drove Gilbert to despair ; but one fine morning, when Monsieur Beausire had doubtless overleaped the barrier of mimic eloquence, and found an opportunity of bringing persuasive words to his aid, Nicole profited by André's absence to descend to the courtyard and join Monsieur Beausire, who was assisting his friend, the superintendent of the stables, to train a little Shetland pony.

From the court they passed into the garden, and from thence into the shady avenue which leads to Versailles. Gilbert followed the amorous couple with the ferocious joy of a tiger who scents his prey. He counted their steps, their sighs, learned by heart all he heard of their conversation, and it may be presumed that the result pleased him, for the next day, freed from all embarrassment, he displayed himself openly at his attic window, humming a song and looking quite at ease, and so far from fearing to be seen by Nicole, that, on the contrary, he seemed to brave her look.

Nicole was mending an embroidered silken mitten belonging to her mistress ; she heard the song, raised her head, and saw Gilbert. The first evidence she gave of his presence was a contemptuous pouting, which bordered on the bitter, and breathed of hostility at a league's distance. But Gilbert sustained this look with such a singular smile, and there was such provoking intelligence in his air and in his manner of singing, that Nicole looked down and blushed.

"She understands me," thought Gilbert ; "that is all I wished." On subsequent occasions Gilbert continued the same behaviour, and it was now Nicole's turn to tremble. She went so far as to long for an interview with him, in order to free her heart from the load with which the satirical looks of the young gardener had burdened it.

Gilbert saw that she sought him. He could not misunderstand the short dry coughs which sounded near the window whenever Nicole knew him to be in his attic, nor the goings and comings of the young girl in the corridor when she supposed he might be ascending or descending the stairs. For a short time he was very proud of this triumph,

which he attributed entirely to his strength of character and wise precautions. Nicole watched him so well that once she spied him as he mounted to his attic. She called him, but he did not reply.

Prompted either by curiosity or fear, Nicole went still farther. One evening she took off her pretty high-heeled slippers, a present from Andriée, and with a trembling and hurried step she ventured into the attic, at the end of which she saw Gilbert's door. There was still sufficient daylight to enable Gilbert, aware of Nicole's approach, to see her distinctly through the joining, or rather through the crevices of the panels. She knocked at the door, knowing well that he was in his room, but Gilbert did not reply.

It was, nevertheless, a dangerous temptation for him. He could, at his ease, humble her who thus came to entreat his pardon, and, prompted by this thought, he had already raised his hand to draw the bolt, which, with his habitual precaution and vigilance, he had fastened to avoid surprise.

"But no," thought he, "no. She is all calculation; it is from fear or interest alone that she comes to seek me. She therefore hopes to gain something by her visit; but if so, what may I not lose?"

And with this reasoning he let his hand fall again by his side. Nicole, after having knocked at the door two or three times, retired, frowning. Gilbert therefore kept all his advantage, and Nicole had only to redouble her cunning in order not to lose hers entirely. At last all these projects and counter-projects reduced themselves to this dialogue, which took place between the belligerent parties one evening at the chapel door, where chance had brought them together.

"Ha! good evening, Monsieur Gilbert, you are here then, are you?"

"Oh! good evening, Mademoiselle Nicole; you are at Trianon?"

"As you see.—waiting-maid to mademoiselle."

"And I am assistant gardener."

Then Nicole made a deep curtsey to Gilbert, who returned her a most courtly bow, and they separated. Gilbert ascended to his attic as if he had been on his way thither, and Nicole left the offices, and proceeded on her errand; but Gilbert glided down again stealthily, and followed the young *femme-de-chambre*, calculating that she was going to meet Monsieur Beausire.

A man was indeed waiting for her beneath the shadows of the alley; Nicole approached him. It was too dark for Gilbert to recognise Monsieur Beausire; and the absence of the plume puzzled him so much, that he let Nicole return to her domicile, and followed the man as far as the gate of Trianon.

It was not Monsieur Beausire, but a man of a certain age, or rather certainly aged, with a distinguished air, and a brisk gait, notwithstanding his advanced years. When he approached, Gilbert, who carried his assurance so far as almost to brush past him, recognized Monsieur de Richelieu.

“*Peste!*” said he, “first an officer, now a marshal of France! Mademoiselle Nicole ascends in the scale.”

CHAPTER XCV.

THE PARLIAMENTS.

WHILE all these minor intrigues, hatched and brought to light beneath the linden-trees and amidst the alleys of Trianon, formed a sufficiently animated existence for the insects of this little world, the great intrigues of the town, like threatening tempests, spread their vast wings over the palace of Themis, as Monsieur Jean Dubarry wrote in mythological parlance to his sister.

The parliaments, those degenerate remains of the ancient French opposition, had taken breath beneath the capricious government of Louis XV. ; but since their protector, Monsieur de Choiseul, had fallen, they felt the approach of danger, and they prepared to meet it by measures as energetic as their circumstances would permit.

Every general commotion is kindled at first by some personal quarrel, as the pitched battles of armies commence by skirmishes of outposts. Since Monsieur de la Chalotais had attacked Monsieur d'Aiguillon, and in so doing had personified the struggle of the *tiers-état* with the feudal lords, the public mind had taken possession of the question, and would not permit it to be deferred or displaced.

Now the king — whom the parliament of Brittany and of all France had deluged with a flood of petitions, more or less submissive and filial — the king, thanks to Madame Dubarry, had just given his countenance to the feudal against the *tiers* party, by nominating Monsieur d'Aiguillon to the command of his light horse,

Monsieur Jean Dubarry had described it very correctly; it was a smart fillip to "the dear and trusty counsellors, sitting in high court of parliament."

"How would the blow be taken?" Town and court asked itself this question every morning at sunrise; but members of parliament are clever people, and where others are much embarrassed they see clearly. They began with agreeing among themselves as to the application and the result of this blow, after which they adopted the following resolution, when it had been clearly ascertained that the blow had been given and received.

"The court of parliament will deliberate upon the conduct of the ex-governor of Brittany, and give its opinion thereon."

But the king parried the blow by sending a message to the peers and princes, forbidding them to repair to the palace, or be present at any deliberation which might take place concerning M. d'Aiguillon. They obeyed to the letter.

Then the parliament, determined to do its business itself, passed a decree, in which, after declaring that the Duke d'Aiguillon was seriously inculpated and tainted with suspicion, even on matters which touched his honour, it proclaimed that that peer was suspended from the functions of the peerage, until, by a judgment given in the court of peers, with the forms and solemnities prescribed by the laws and customs of the kingdom, the place of which nothing can supply, he had fully cleared himself from the accusations and suspicions now resting on his honour.

But such a decree passed merely in the court of parliament before those interested, and inscribed in their reports, was nothing; public notoriety was wanting, and, above all, that uproar which song alone ventures to raise in France, and which makes song the sovereign controller of events and rulers. This decree of parliament must be heightened and strengthened by the power of song.

Paris desired nothing better than to take part in this

commotion. Little disposed to view either court or parliament with favour, Paris in its ceaseless movement was waiting for some good subject for a laugh, as a transition from all the causes for tears which had been furnished it for centuries.

The decree was therefore properly and duly passed, and the parliament appointed commissioners, who were to have it printed under their own eyes. Ten thousand copies of the decree were to be struck off, and the distribution organized without delay.

Then, as it was one of their rules that the person interested should be informed of what the court had done respecting him, the same commissioners proceeded to the hotel of the Duke d'Aiguillon, who had just arrived in Paris for an important interview, no less indeed than to have a clear and open explanation, which had become necessary between the duke and his uncle, the marshal.

Thanks to Rafté, all Versailles had been informed within an hour of the noble resistance of the old duke to the king's orders, touching the portfolio of Monsieur de Choiseul. Thanks to Versailles, all Paris and all France had learned the same news; so that Richelieu had found himself for some time past on the summit of popularity, from which he made political grimaces at Madame Dubarry and his dear nephew.

The position was unfavourable for Monsieur d'Aiguillon, who was already so unpopular. The marshal, hated, but at the same time feared, by the people, because he was the living type of that nobility which was so respected and so respectable under Louis XV. — the marshal, so Protean in his character, that, after having chosen a part, he was able to withdraw from it without difficulty when circumstances required it, or when a bon-mot might be the result — Richelieu, we repeat, was a dangerous enemy; the more so as the worst part of his enmity was always that which he concealed, in order, as he said, to create a surprise.

The Duke d'Aiguillon, since his interview with Madame

Dubarry, had two flaws in his coat of mail. Suspecting how much anger and thirst for revenge Richelieu concealed under the apparent equality of his temper, he acted as mariners do in certain cases of difficulty — he burst the waterspout with his cannon, assured that the danger would be less if it were faced boldly. He set about looking everywhere for his uncle, therefore, in order to have a serious conversation with him; but nothing was more difficult to accomplish than this step, since the marshal had discovered his wish.

Marches and countermarches commenced. When the marshal saw his nephew at a distance, he sent him a smile, and immediately surrounded himself by people who rendered all communication impossible, thus putting the enemy at defiance as from an impregnable fort.

The Duke d'Aiguillon burst the waterspout. He simply presented himself at his uncle's hotel at Versailles; but Rafté, from his post at the little window of the hotel looking upon the court, recognised the liveries of the duke, and warned his master. The duke entered the marshal's bedroom, where he found Rafté alone, who, with a most confidential smile, was so indiscreet as to inform the nephew that his uncle had not slept at home that night.

Monsieur d'Aiguillon bit his lips and retired. When he returned to his hotel, he wrote to the marshal to request an audience. The marshal could not refuse to reply. If he replied, he could not refuse an audience; and if he granted the audience, how could he refuse a full explanation? Monsieur d'Aiguillon resembled too much those polite and engaging duellists, who hide their evil designs under a fascinating and graceful exterior, lead their man upon the ground with bows and reverences, and there put him to death without pity.

The marshal's self-love was not so powerful as to mislead him; he knew his nephew's power. Once in his presence, his opponent would force from him either a pardon or a concession. Now, Richelieu never pardoned any one, and

concessions to an enemy are always a dangerous fault in politics. Therefore, on receipt of Monsieur d'Aiguillon's letter, he pretended to have left Paris for several days.

Rafté, whom he consulted upon this point, gave him the following advice :

"We are on the fair way to ruin Monsieur d'Aiguillon. Our friends of the parliament will do the work. If Monsieur d'Aiguillon, who suspects this, can lay his hand upon you before the explosion, he will force from you a promise to assist him in case of misfortune ; for your resentment is of that kind that you cannot openly gratify it at the expense of your family interest. If, on the contrary, you refuse, Monsieur d'Aiguillon will leave you knowing you to be his enemy and attributing all his misfortunes to you ; and he will go away comforted, as people always are when they have found out the cause of their complaint, even although the complaint itself be not removed."

"That is quite true," replied Richelieu ; "but I cannot conceal myself for ever. How many days will it be before the explosion takes place ?"

"Six days, monseigneur."

"Are you sure ?"

Rafté drew from his pocket a letter from a counsellor of the parliament. This letter contained only the two following lines :

"It has been decided that the decree shall be passed. It will take place on Thursday, the final day fixed on by the company."

"Then the affair is very simple," replied the marshal ; "send the duke back his letter with a note from your own hand :

"'MONSIEUR, — You have doubtless heard of the departure of monseigneur the marshal for . . . This change of air has been judged indispensable by the marshal's physician, who thinks him rather overworked. If, as I believe is the case, after what you

did me the honour to tell me the other day, you wish to have an interview with monseigneur, I can assure you that on Thursday evening next the duke, on his return from . . . will sleep in his hotel in Paris, where you will certainly find him.””

“And now,” added the marshal, “hide me somewhere until Thursday.”

Rafté punctually fulfilled these instructions; the letter was written and sent, the hiding-place was found. Only one evening, Richelieu, who began to feel very much wearied, slipped out and proceeded to Trianon to speak to Nicole. He risked nothing, or thought he risked nothing, by this step, knowing the Duke d’Aiguillon to be at the pavilion of Luciennes. The result of this manœuvre was, that even if Monsieur d’Aiguillon suspected something, he could not foresee the blow which menaced him until he had actually met his enemy’s sword.

The delay until Thursday satisfied him; on that day he left Versailles with the hope of at last meeting and combating this impalpable antagonist. This Thursday was, as we have said, the day on which parliament was to proclaim its decree.

An agitation, low and muttering as yet, but perfectly intelligible to the Parisian, who knows so well the level of these popular waves, reigned in the wide streets through which Monsieur d’Aiguillon’s carriage passed. No notice was taken of him, for he had observed the precaution of coming in a carriage without a coat of arms or other heraldic distinctions.

Here and there he saw busy-looking crowds, who were showing each other some paper which they read with many gesticulations, and collecting in noisy groups, like ants round a piece of sugar fallen to the ground. But this was the period of inoffensive agitation; the people were then in the habit of congregating together in this manner for a corn tax, for an article in the “Gazette de Hollande,” for a verse of Voltaire’s, or for a song against Dubarry or Maupeou.

Monsieur d'Aiguillon drove straight to Monsieur de Richelieu's hotel. He found there only Rafté. "The marshal," the secretary said, "was expected every moment; some delay of the post must have detained him at the barrier."

Monsieur d'Aiguillon proposed waiting, not without expressing some impatience to Rafté, for he took this excuse as a new defeat. His ill-humour increased however when Rafté told him that the marshal would be in despair on his return to find that Monsieur d'Aiguillon had been kept waiting; that besides, he was not to sleep in Paris, as he had at first intended; and that, most probably, he would not return from the country alone, and would just call in passing at his hotel to see if there was any news; that therefore Monsieur d'Aiguillon would be wiser to return to his house, where the marshal could call as he passed.

"Listen, Rafté," said D'Aiguillon, who had become more gloomy during this mysterious reply; "you are my uncle's conscience, and I trust you will answer me as an honest man. I am played upon, am I not, and the marshal does not wish to see me? Do not interrupt me, Rafté; you have been a valuable counsellor to me, and I might have been, and can yet be, a good friend to you; must I return to Versailles?"

"Monseigneur, I assure you, upon my honour, you will receive a visit at your own house from the marshal in less than an hour."

"Then I can as well wait here, since he will come this way."

"I have had the honour of informing you that he will probably not be alone."

"I understand. And I have your word, Rafté?"

At these words the duke retired deep in thought, but with an air as noble and graceful as the marshal's was the reverse, when, after his nephew's departure, he emerged from a closet, through the glass door of which he had been peeping.

The marshal smiled like one of those hideous demons which Callot has introduced in his "Temptations."

"He suspects nothing, Rafté?" said he.

"Nothing, monseigneur."

"What hour is it?"

"The hour has nothing to do with the matter, monseigneur. You must wait until our little procureur of the Chatelet makes his appearance. The commissioners are still at the printer's."

Rafté had scarcely finished, when a footman opened a secret door, and introduced a personage, very ugly, very greasy, very black — one of those living pens for which Monsieur Dubarry professed such a profound antipathy.

Rafté pushed the marshal into a closet, and hastened, smiling, to meet this man.

"Ah! it is you, Monsieur Flageot?" said he; "I am delighted to see you."

"Your servant, Monsieur Rafté. Well! the business is done."

"Is it printed?"

"Five thousand are struck off. The first proofs are already scattered over the town, the others are drying."

"What a misfortune, my dear Monsieur Flageot! What a blow to the marshal's family!"

Monsieur Flageot, to avoid the necessity of answering — that is, of telling a lie — drew a large silver box from his pocket and slowly inhaled a pinch of Spanish snuff.

"Well, what is to be done now?" asked Rafté.

"The forms, my dear sir, the forms. The commissioners, now that they are sure of the printing and the distribution, will immediately enter their carriages, which are waiting at the door of the printing-office, and proceed to make known the decree to Monsieur the Duke d'Aiguillon, who happens luckily — I mean unfortunately, Monsieur Rafté — to be in his hotel in Paris, where they can have an interview with him in person."

Rafté hastily seized an enormous bag of legal documents from a shelf, which he gave to Monsieur Flageot, saying:

“These are the suits which I mentioned to you, sir ; the marshal has the greatest confidence in your abilities, and leaves this affair, which ought to prove most remunerative, entirely in your hands. I have to thank you for your good offices in this deplorable conflict of Monsieur d’Aiguillon’s with the all-powerful parliament of Paris, and also for your very valuable advice.”

And he gently, but with some haste, pushed Monsieur Flageot, delighted with the weight of his burden, towards the door of the antechamber. Then, releasing the marshal from his prison :

“Quick, monseigneur, to your carriage ! You have no time to lose if you wish to be present at the scene. Take care that your horses go more quickly than those of the

CHAPTER XCVI.

IN WHICH IT IS SHOWN THAT THE PATH OF A MINISTER
IS NOT ALWAYS STREWN WITH ROSES.

THE Marshal de Richelieu's horses did go more quickly than those of the commissioners, for the marshal entered first into the court-yard of the Hotel d'Aiguillon.

The duke did not expect his uncle, and was preparing to return to Luciennes to inform Madame Dubarry that the enemy had been unmasked, when the announcement of the marshal's arrival roused his disengaged mind from its torpor.

The duke hastened to meet his uncle, and took both his hands in his with a warmth of affection proportionate to the fear he had experienced. The marshal was as affectionate as the duke; the tableau was touching. The Duke d'Aiguillon, however, was manifestly endeavouring to hasten the period of explanation, while the marshal, on the contrary, delayed it as much as possible, by looking at the pictures, the bronzes, or the tapestry, and complaining of dreadful fatigue.

The duke cut off the marshal's retreat, imprisoned him in an armchair, as Monsieur de Villars imprisoned the Prince Eugene in Marchiennes, and commenced the attack.

“Uncle,” said he, “is it true that you, the most discriminating man in France, have judged so ill of me as to think that my self-seeking did not extend to us both?”

There was no longer room for retreat; Richelieu decided on his plan of action.

“What do you mean by that?” replied he, “and in what do you perceive that I judged unfavourably of you or the reverse, my dear nephew?”

“Uncle, you are offended with me.”

“But for what, and how ?”

“Oh ! these loopholes, monseigneur, will not serve you ; in one word, you avoid me when I need your assistance.”

“Upon my honour, I do not understand you.”

“I will explain, then. The king refused to nominate you for his minister, and because I, on my part, accepted the command of the light horse, you imagine that I have deserted and betrayed you. That dear countess, too, who loves you so well !”

Here Richelieu listened eagerly, but not to his nephew's words alone.

“You say she loves me well, this dear countess ?” he added.

“And I can prove it.”

“But, my dear fellow, I never doubted it. I send for you to assist me to push the wheel ; you are younger, and therefore stronger than I am ; you succeed, I fail. That is in the natural course of things, and on my faith I cannot imagine why you have all these scruples. If you have acted for my interest, you will be a hundredfold repaid, if against me — well ! I shall only return the fisticuff. Does that require explanation ?”

“In truth, uncle — ”

“You are a child, duke. Your position is magnificent ; a peer of France, a duke, a commander of the light horse, minister in six weeks — you ought to be beyond the influence of all futile intrigues. Success absolves, my dear child. Suppose — I like apolagues — suppose that we are the two mules in the fable. But what noise is that ?”

“Nothing, my dear uncle, proceed.”

“There is something ; I hear a carriage in the court-yard.”

“Do not let it interrupt you, uncle, pray ; your conversation interests me extremely. I like apolagues, too.”

“Well, my friend, I was going to say that when you are prosperous you will never meet with reproaches, nor need you fear the spite of the envious ; but if you limp, if you

fall — *Diable!* you must take care — then it is that the wolf will attack you. But you see I was right; there is a noise in the antechamber; it is the portfolio which they are bringing you, no doubt. The little countess must have exerted herself for you."

The usher entered.

"Messieurs the commissioners of the parliament!" said he, uneasily.

"Ha!" exclaimed Richelieu.

"The commissioners of the parliament here? What do they want with me?" replied the duke, not at all reassured by his uncle's smile.

"In the king's name!" cried a sonorous voice at the end of the antechamber.

"Oh, ho!" cried Richelieu.

Monsieur d'Aiguillon turned very pale; he rose, however, and advanced to the threshold of the apartment to introduce the two commissioners, behind whom were stationed two motionless ushers, and in the distance a host of alarmed footmen.

"What is your errand here?" asked the duke, in a trembling voice.

"Have we the honour of speaking to the Duke d'Aiguillon?" said one of the commissioners.

"I am the Duke d'Aiguillon, gentlemen."

The commissioner, bowing profoundly, drew from his belt the act in proper form, and read it in a loud and distinct voice.

It was the decree, detailed, complete, and circumstantial, which declared D'Aiguillon gravely arraigned and prejudiced by suspicions even regarding matters which affected his honour, and suspended him from his functions as peer of the realm.

The duke listened to the reading like a man thunderstruck. He stood motionless as a statue on its pedestal, and did not even hold out his hand to take the copy of the decree which the commissioners of the parliament offered him.

It was the marshal who, also standing, but alert and nimble, took the paper, read it, and returned the bow of messieurs the commissioners. They were already at some distance from the mansion, before the Duke d'Aiguillon recovered from his stupor.

“This is a severe blow,” said Richelieu; “you are no longer a peer of France; it is humiliating.”

The duke turned to his uncle as if he had only at that moment recovered the power of life and thought.

“You did not expect it?” asked Richelieu, in the same tone.

“And you, uncle?” rejoined D'Aiguillon.

“How do you imagine any one could suspect that the parliament would strike so bold a blow at the favoured courtier of the king and his favourite; these people will ruin themselves.”

The duke sat down, and leaned his burning cheek on his hand.

“But if,” continued the old marshal, forcing the dagger deeper into the wound, “if the parliament degrades you from the peerage because you are nominated to the command of the light-horse, they will decree you a prisoner and condemn you to the stake when you are appointed minister. These people hate you, D'Aiguillon; do not trust them.”

The duke bore this cruel irony with the fortitude of a hero; his misfortune raised and strengthened his mind. Richelieu thought this fortitude was only insensibility, or want of comprehension perhaps, and that the wound had not been deep enough.

“Being no longer a peer,” said he, “you will be less exposed to the hatred of these lawyers. Take refuge in a few years of obscurity. Besides, look you, this obscurity, which will be your safeguard, will come without your seeking it. Deprived of your functions of peer, you will have more difficulty in reaching the ministry, and may perhaps escape the business altogether. But if you will struggle,

my dear fellow, why, you have Madame Dubarry on your side; she loves you, and she is a powerful support."

Monsieur d'Aiguillon rose. He did not even cast an angry look upon the marshal in return for all the suffering the old man had inflicted upon him.

"You are right, uncle," he replied calmly, "and your wisdom is shown in this last advice. The Countess Dubarry, to whom you had the goodness to present me, and to whom you spoke so favourably of me and with so much zeal, that every one at Luciennes can bear witness to it, Madame Dubarry will defend me. Thanks to Heaven, she likes me; she is brave, and exerts an all-powerful influence over the mind of the king. Thanks, uncle, for your advice; I fly thither as to a haven of safety. My horses! Bourgignon — to Luciennes!"

The marshal remained in the middle of an unfinished smile. Monsieur d'Aiguillon bowed respectfully to his uncle and quitted the apartment, leaving the marshal very much perplexed, and above all very much confused, at the eagerness with which he had attacked this noble and feeling victim.

There was some consolation for the old marshal in the mad joy of the Parisians when they read in the evening the ten thousand copies of the decree, which was scrambled for in the streets. But he could not help sighing when Rafté asked for an account of the evening. Nevertheless, he told it without concealing anything.

"Then the blow is parried?" said the secretary.

"Yes and no, Rafté; but the wound is not mortal, and we have at Trianon something better, which I reproach myself for not having made my sole care. We have started two hares, Rafté; it was very foolish."

"Why — if you seize the best?" replied Rafté.

"Oh, my friend, remember that the best is always the one we have not taken, and we would invariably give the one we hold for the one which has escaped."

Rafté shrugged his shoulders, and yet Monsieur de Richelieu was in the right.

"You think," said he, "that Monsieur d'Aiguillon will escape?"

"Do you think the king will, simpleton?"

"Oh! the king finds an opening everywhere; but this matter does not concern the king, that I know of."

"Where the king can pass, Madame Dubarry will pass, as she holds fast by his skirts; where Madame Dubarry has passed, D'Aiguillon will pass also—but you understand nothing of politics, Rafté."

"Monseigneur, Monsieur Flageot is not of your opinion."

"Well, what does this Monsieur Flageot say? But first of all, tell me what he is."

"He is a procureur, monsieur."

"Well?"

"Well! Monsieur Flageot thinks that the king cannot get out of this matter."

"Oh! ho!—and who will stop the lion?"

"Faith, monsieur, the rat!"

"And you believe him?"

"I always believe a procureur who promises to do evil."

"We shall see what means Monsieur Flageot intends to employ, Rafté."

"That is what I say, monseigneur."

"Come to supper then, that I may get to bed. It has quite upset me to see that my poor nephew is no longer peer of France, and will not be minister. I am an uncle, Rafté, after all!"

Monsieur de Richelieu sighed, and then commenced to laugh.

"You have every quality, however, requisite for a minister," replied Rafté.

CHAPTER XCVII.

MONSIEUR D'AIGUILLO TAKES HIS REVENGE.

THE morning succeeding the day on which the terrible decree had thrown Paris and Versailles into an uproar, when every one was anxiously awaiting the result of this decree, the Duke de Richelieu, who had returned to Versailles and had resumed his usual mode of life, saw Rafté enter his apartment with a letter in his hand. The secretary scrutinized and weighed this letter with such an appearance of anxiety that his emotion quickly communicated itself to his master.

"What is the matter now?" asked the marshal.

"Something not very agreeable, I presume, monseigneur, and which is enclosed in this letter."

"Why do you imagine so?"

"Because the letter is from the Duke d'Aiguillon."

"Ha!" said the duke, "from my nephew?"

"Yes, monseigneur; after the king's council broke up, an usher of the chamber called on me and handed me this paper for you. I have been turning it over and over for the last ten minutes, and I cannot help suspecting that it contains some evil tidings."

The duke held out his hand.

"Give it me," said he, "I am brave."

"I warn you," interrupted Rafté, "that when the usher gave me the paper, he chuckled outrageously."

"*Diable!* that bodes ill," replied the marshal; "but give it me, nevertheless."

"And he added: 'Monsieur d'Aiguillon wishes the marshal to have this immediately.'"

"Pain! thou shalt not make me say that thou art an evil," said the marshal, breaking the seal with a firm hand. And he read it.

"Ha! you change countenance," said Rafté, standing with his hands crossed behind him, in an attitude of observation.

"Is it possible!" exclaimed Richelieu, continuing to read.

"It seems, then, that it is serious?"

"You look quite delighted."

"Of course — I see that I was not mistaken."

The marshal read on.

"The king is good," said he, after a moment's pause.

"He appoints Monsieur d'Aiguillon minister?"

"Better than that."

"Oh! What then?"

"Read and ponder."

Rafté in his turn read the note. It was in the handwriting of D'Aiguillon, and was couched in the following terms:

"**M**Y DEAR UNCLE, — Your good advice has borne its fruit; I confided my wrongs to that excellent friend of our house, the Countess Dubarry, who has deigned to lay them at his Majesty's feet. The king is indignant at the violence with which the gentlemen of the parliament pursue me, and in consideration of the services I have so faithfully rendered him, his Majesty, in this morning's council, has annulled the decree of parliament, and has commanded me to continue my functions as peer of France.

"Knowing the pleasure this news will cause you, my dear uncle, I send you the tenor of the decision, which his Majesty in council came to to-day. I have had it copied by a secretary, and you have the announcement before any one else.

"Deign to believe in my affectionate respect, my dear uncle, and continue to bestow on me your good will and advice.

"(Signed) — DUKE D'AIGUILLON."

“ He mocks at me into the bargain ! ” cried Richelieu.

“ Faith, I think so, monseigneur.”

“ The king throws himself into the hornet’s nest ! ”

“ You would not believe me yesterday, when I told you so.”

“ I did not say he would not throw himself into it, Rafté ; I said he would contrive to get out of it. Now, you see, he does get out of it.”

“ The fact is, the parliament is beaten.”

“ And I also.”

“ For the present, yes.”

“ For ever ! Yesterday I foresaw it, and you consoled me so well, that some misfortune could not fail to ensue.”

“ Monseigneur, you despair a little too soon, I think.”

“ Master Rafté, you are a fool. I am beaten, and I must pay the stake. You do not fully comprehend, perhaps, how disagreeable it is to me to be the laughing-stock of Luciennes ; at this moment, the duke is mocking me in the arms of Madame Dubarry : Mademoiselle Chon, and Monsieur Jean are roaring themselves hoarse at my expense, whilst the little negro ceases to stuff himself with sweet-meats to make game of me. *Parbleu !* I have a tolerably good temper, but all this makes me furious.”

“ Furious, monseigneur ? ”

“ I have said it — furious ! ”

“ Then you have done what you should not have done,” said Rafté, philosophically.

“ You urged me on, Master Secretary.”

“ I ? ”

“ Yes, you.”

“ Why, what is it to me whether Monsieur d’Aiguillon is a peer of France or not — I ask you, monseigneur ? Your nephew does me no injury, I think.”

“ Master Rafté, you are impertinent.”

“ You have been telling me so for the last forty-nine years, monseigneur.”

“ Well, I shall repeat it again.”

"Not for forty-nine years more, that is one comfort "

"Rafté, if this the way you care for my interests — "

"The interests of your little passions ? No, monseigneur, never ! Man of genius as you are, you sometimes commit follies which I could not forgive even in an understander like myself."

"Explain yourself, Rafté, and if I am wrong, I will confess it."

"Yesterday you thirsted for vengeance, did you not ? You wished to behold the humiliation of your nephew, you wished, as it were, to be the bearer of the decree of parliament, and gloat over the tremblings and palpitations of your victim, as Monsieur Crebillon the younger says. Well ! monseigneur, such sights as these must be well paid for, such pleasures cost dear. You are rich — pay, pay, monseigneur !"

"What would you have done in my place, then, O most skilful of tacticians ? Come, let me see."

"Nothing ! I would have waited without giving any sign of life. But you itched to oppose the parliament to the Dubarry, from the moment she found that Monsieur d'Aiguillon was a younger man than youself "

A groan was the marshal's only reply.

"Well !" continued Rafté, "the parliament was tolerably well prompted by you before it did what it has done. The decree once passed, you should have offered your services to your nephew, who would have suspected nothing "

"That is all well and good, and I admit that I did wrong, but you should have warned me "

"I hinder any evil ! You take me for some one else, monseigneur, you repeat to every one that comes that I am your creature, that you have trained me, and yet you would have me not delighted when I see a folly committed, or a misfortune approaching ! Fie ! fie !"

"Then a misfortune will happen, Master Sorcerer ?"

"Certainly."

"What misfortune ?"

“ You will quarrel, and Monsieur d’Aiguillon will become the link between the parliament and Madame Dubarry ; then he will be minister, and you exiled, or at the Bastille.”

The marshal in his anger upset the contents of his snuff-box upon the carpet.

“ In the Bastille ! ” said he, shrugging his shoulders ; “ is Louis XV., think you, Louis XIV. ? ”

“ No, but Madame Dubarry, supported by Monsieur d’Aiguillon, is quite equal to Madame de Maintenon. Take care ; I do not know any princess in the present day who would bring you bonbons and eggs.”

“ These are melancholy prognostics,” replied the marshal, after a long silence. “ You read the future ; but what of the present, if you please ? ”

“ Monseigneur is to wise for me to give him advice.”

“ Come, master witty-pate, are you too not mocking me ? ”

“ I beg you to remark, monseigneur, that you confound dates ; a man is never called a witty-pate after forty : now, I am sixty-seven.”

“ No matter, assist me out of this scrape — and quickly too — quickly ! ”

“ By an advice ? ”

“ By anything you please.”

“ The time has not come yet.”

“ Now you are certainly jesting.”

“ Would to Heaven I were ! When I jest, the subject shall be a jesting matter — and unfortunately this is not.”

“ What do you mean by saying that it is not yet time ? ”

“ No, monseigneur, it is not time. If the announcement of the king’s decree were known in Paris beforehand, I would not say. Shall we send a courier to the President d’Aligre ? ”

“ That they may laugh at us all the sooner ? ”

“ What a ridiculous self-love, monseigneur ! You would make a saint lose patience. Stay, let me finish my plan of a descent on England, and you can finish drowning yourself in your portfolio intrigue, since the business is already half done.”

The marshal was accustomed to these sullen humours of his secretary. He knew that when his melancholy had once declared itself he was dangerous to touch with ungloved fingers.

“Come,” said he, “do not pout at me, and if I do not understand, explain yourself.”

“Then monseigneur wishes me to trace out a line of conduct for him?”

“Certainly, since you think I cannot conduct myself.”

“Well then, listen.”

“I am all attention.”

“You must send by a trusty messenger to Monsieur d'Aligre,” said Rafté, abruptly, “the Duke d'Aiguillon's letter, and also the decree of the king in council. You must then wait till the parliament has met and deliberated upon it, which will take place immediately; whereupon you must order your carriage, and pay a visit to your little procureur, Monsieur Flageot.”

“Eh!” said Richclieu, whom this name made start as it had done on the previous day; “Monsieur Flageot again! What the deuce has Monsieur Flageot to do with all this, and what am I to do at his house?”

“I have had the honour to tell you, monseigneur, that Monsieur Flageot is your procureur.”

“Well! what then?”

“Well, if he is your procureur, he has certain bags of yours—certain law-suits on hand; you must go and ask him about them.”

“To-morrow?”

“Yes, monseigneur, to-morrow.”

“But all this is your affair, Monsieur Rafté.”

“By no means! by no means! When Monsieur Flageot was a simple scribbling drudge, then I could treat with him as an equal; but as, dating from to-morrow, Monsieur Flageot is an Attila, a scourge of kings—neither more nor less—it is not asking too much of a duke, a peer, a marshal of France, to converse with this all-powerful man.”

“Is this serious, or are we acting a farce?”

“You will see to-morrow if it is serious, monseigneur.”

“But tell me what will be the result of my visit to your Monsieur Flageot.”

“I should be very sorry to do so; you would endeavour to prove to me to-morrow that you had guessed it beforehand. Good-night, monseigneur. Remember: a courier to Monsieur d'Aligre immediately; a visit to Monsieur Flageot to-morrow. Oh! the address? The coachman knows it; he has driven me there frequently during the last week.”

CHAPTER XCVIII.

IN WHICH THE READER WILL ONCE MORE MEET AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE WHOM HE THOUGHT LOST, AND WHOM PERHAPS HE DID NOT REGRET.

THE reader will, no doubt, ask why Monsieur Flageot, who is about to play so majestic a part in our story, was called procureur instead of avocat; and as the reader is quite right, we shall satisfy his curiosity.

The vacations had, for some time, been frequent in parliament, and the lawyers spoke so seldom that their speeches were not worth speaking of. Master Flageot, foreseeing the time when there would be no pleading at all, made certain arrangements with Master Guildou, the procureur, in virtue of which the latter yielded him up office and clients on consideration of the sum of twenty-five thousand francs paid down. That is how Master Flageot became a procureur. But if we are asked how he managed to pay the twenty-five thousand francs, we reply, by marrying Madame Marguerite, to whom this sum was left as an inheritance about the end of the year 1770—three months before Monsieur de Choiseul's exile.

Master Flageot had been long distinguished for his persevering adherence to the opposition party. Once a procureur, he redoubled his violence, and by this violence succeeded in gaining some celebrity. It was this celebrity, together with the publication of an incendiary pamphlet on the subject of the conflict between Monsieur d'Aiguillon and Monsieur de la Chalotais, which attracted the attention of Monsieur Rafté, who had occasion to keep himself well informed concerning the affairs of parliament.

But, notwithstanding his new dignity and his increasing importance, Master Flageot did not leave the Rue du Petit-Lion-Saint-Sauveur. It would have been too cruel a blow for Madame Marguerite not to have heard the neighbours call her Madame Flageot, and not to have inspired respect in the breasts of Monsieur Guildou's clerks, who had entered the service of the new procureur.

The reader may readily imagine what Monsieur de Richelieu suffered in traversing Paris—the filthy Paris of that region—to reach the disgusting hole which the Parisian magistrature dignified with the name of street.

In front of Monsieur Flageot's door Monsieur de Richelieu's carriage was stopped by another carriage which pulled up at the same moment. The marshal perceived a woman's head-dress protruding from the window of this carriage; and as his sixty-five years of age had not quenched the ardour of his gallantry, he hastily jumped out on the muddy pavement, and proceeded to offer his hand to the lady, who was unaccompanied.

But this day the marshal's evil star was in the ascendant. A long, withered leg which was stretched out to reach the step betrayed the old woman. A wrinkled face, adorned with a dark streak of rouge, proved further that the old woman was not only old, but decrepit.

Nevertheless, there was no room for retreat; the marshal had made the movement, and the movement had been seen. Besides, Monsieur de Richelieu himself was no longer young. In the mean time, the litigant—for what woman with a carriage would have entered that street had she not been a litigant?—the litigant, we say, did not imitate the duke's hesitation; with a ghastly smile she placed her hand in Richelieu's.

"I have seen that face somewhere before," thought Richelieu; then he added:

"Does madame also intend to visit Monsieur Flageot?"

"Yes, duke," replied the old lady.

"Oh, I have the honour to be known to you, madame!"

exclaimed the duke, disagreeably surprised, and stopping on the threshold of the dark passage.

"Who does not know the Duke de Richelieu?" was the reply. "I should not be a woman if I did not."

"This she-ape thinks she is a woman!" murmured the conqueror of Mahon, and he made a most graceful bow.

"If I may venture to ask the question," added he, "to whom have I the honour of speaking?"

"I am the Countess de Béarn, at your service," replied the old lady, curtseying with courtly reverence upon the dirty floor of the passage, and about three inches from the open trap-door of a cellar, into which the marshal wickedly awaited her disappearance at the third bend.

"I am delighted, madame, — enchanted," said he, "and I return a thousand thanks to fate. You also have law-suits on hand, countess?"

"Oh, duke, I have only one; but what a lawsuit! Is it possible that you have never heard of it?"

"Oh, frequently, frequently — that great lawsuit. True; I entreat your pardon. How the deuce could I have forgotten that?"

"Against the Saluces!"

"Against the Saluces, yes, countess; the lawsuit about which the song was written."

"A song?" said the old lady, piqued, "what song?"

"Take care, madame, there is a trap-door here," said the duke, who saw that the old woman was decided not to throw herself into the cellar; "take hold of the balustrade — I mean the cord."

The old lady mounted the first steps; the duke followed her.

"Yes, a very humorous song," said he.

"A humorous song on my lawsuit!"

"Dame! I shall leave you to judge; but perhaps you know it?"

"Not at all."

"It is to the tune of the Bourbonnaise; it runs so:

“‘ Embarrassed, countess, as I stand,
Give me, I pray, a helping hand,
And I am quite at your command.’

It is Madame Dubarry who speaks, you must understand.”

“That is very impertinent towards her.”

“Oh! what can you expect? the ballad-mongers respect no one. Heavens! how greasy this cord is! Then you reply as follows:

“‘ I’m very old and stubborn, too;
I’m forced at law my rights to sue;
Ah, who can help me ? tell me who !’”

“Oh, monsieur, it is frightful!” cried the countess; “a woman of quality is not to be insulted in this manner.”

“Madame, excuse me if I have sung out of tune; these stairs heat me so. Ah! here we are at last. Allow me to pull the bell.”

The old lady, grumbling all the time, made way for the duke to pass.

The marshal rang, and Madame Flageot, who in becoming a procureur’s wife had not ceased to fill the functions of portress and cook, opened the door. The two litigants were ushered into Monsieur Flageot’s study, where they found that worthy in a state of furious excitement, and with a pen in his mouth, hard at work dictating a terrible plea to his head-clerk.

“Good heavens, Master Flageot! what is the matter?” cried the countess, at whose voice the attorney turned round.

“Ah, madame, your most humble servant — a chair here for the Countess de Béarn. This gentleman is a friend of yours, madame, I presume. But surely — oh! I cannot be mistaken — the Duke de Richelieu in my house! Another chair, Bernadet, another chair!”

“Master Flageot,” said the countess, “how does my law-suit get on, pray?”

"Ah, madame, I was just now working for you."

"Very good, Master Flageot, very good."

"And after a fashion, my lady, which will make some noise, I hope."

"Hum! Take care!"

"Oh! madame, there is no longer any occasion for caution."

"Then if you are busy about my affair, you can give an audience to the duke."

"Excuse me, monseigneur," said Master Flageot; "but you are too gallant not to understand —"

"I understand, Master Flageot; I understand."

"But now I can attend to you exclusively."

"Don't be uneasy; I shall not abuse your good-nature; you are aware what brings me here?"

"The bags which Monsieur Rafté gave me the other day."

"Some papers relative to my lawsuit of — my suit about — deuce take it! You must know what suit I mean, Master Flageot?"

"Your lawsuit about the lands of Chaperat."

"Very probably; and will you gain it for me? That would be very kind on your part."

"Monseigneur, it is postponed indefinitely."

"Postponed! And why?"

"It will not be brought forward in less than a year, at the earliest."

"For what reason, may I ask?"

"Circumstances, monseigneur, circumstances; you have heard of his Majesty's decree?"

"I think so; but which one? His Majesty publishes so many."

"The one which annuls ours."

"Very well; and what then?"

"Well, monseigneur, we shall reply by burning our ships."

"Burning your ships, my dear friend? — you will burn

the ships of the parliament? I do not quite comprehend you; I was not aware that the parliament had ships."

"The first chamber refuses to register, perhaps?" inquired the Countess de Béarn, whom Richelieu's lawsuit in no way prevented from thinking of her own.

"Better than that."

"The second one also?"

"That would be a mere nothing. Both chambers have resolved not to give any judgments until the king shall have dismissed Monsieur d'Aiguillon."

"Bah!" exclaimed the marshal, rubbing his hands.

"Not adjudicate! on what?" asked the countess, alarmed.

"On the lawsuits, madame."

"They will not adjudicate on my lawsuit," exclaimed the Countess de Béarn, with a dismay which she did not even attempt to conceal.

"Neither on yours, madame, nor the duke's."

"It is iniquitous! It is rebellion against his Majesty's orders, that!"

"Madame," replied the procureur, majestically, "the king has forgotten himself; we shall forget also."

"Monsieur Flageot, you will be sent to the Bastille; remember, I warn you."

"I shall go singing, madame; and if I am sent thither all my fellow members of parliament will follow me, carrying palms in their hands."

"He is mad!" said the countess to Richelieu.

"We are all the same," replied the procureur.

"Oh, oh!" said the marshal, "that is becoming rather curious."

"But, monsieur, you said just now that you were working for me," replied Madame de Béarn.

"I said so, and it is quite true. You, madame, are the first example I cite in my narration; here is the paragraph which relates to you."

He snatched the draft from his clerk's hand, fixed his spectacles upon his nose, and read with emphasis:

"Their position ruined, their fortune compromised, their rights trampled under foot! His Majesty will understand how much they must have suffered. Thus the petitioner had entrusted to his care a very important suit, upon which the fortune of one of the first families in the kingdom depends, by his zeal, his industry, and, he ventures to say, his talents, this suit was progressing favourably, and the rights of the most noble and most powerful lady, Angélique Charlotte Véronique, Countess de Béarn, were on the point of being recognized, proclaimed, when the breath of discord — engulfing —"

"I had just got so far, madame," said the procureur, drawing himself up; "but I think the simile is not amiss."

"Monsieur Flageot," said the countess, "it is forty years ago since I first employed your father, who proved most worthy of my patronage; I continued that patronage to you; you have gained ten or twelve thousand francs by my suit, and you would probably have gained as many more."

"Write down all that," said Monsieur Flageot, eagerly, to his clerk; "it is a testimony, a proof. It shall be inserted in the confirmation."

"But now," interrupted the countess, "I take back all my papers from your charge; from this moment you have lost my confidence."

Master Flageot, thunderstruck with this disgrace, remained for a moment almost stupefied; but, all at once, rising under the blow like a martyr who dies for his religion:

"Be it so," said he. "Bernadet, give the papers back to madame; and you will insert this fact," added he, "that the petitioner preferred his conscience to his fortune."

"I beg your pardon, countess," whispered the marshal in the countess's ear, "but it seems to me that you have acted without reflection."

"In what respect, monseigneur?"

"You take back your papers from this honest procureur, but for what purpose?"

"To take them to another procureur, to another avocat!" exclaimed the countess.

Master Flageot raised his eyes to Heaven, with a mournful smile of self-denial and stoic resignation.

"But," continued the marshal, still whispering in the countess's ear, "if it has been decided that the chambers will not adjudicate, my dear madame, another procureur can do no more than Master Flageot."

"It is a league, then?"

"*Pardieu!* do you think Master Flageot fool enough to protest alone, to lose his practice alone, if his fellow-lawyers were not agreed to do the same, and consequently support him?"

"But you, monseigneur, what will you do?"

"For my part, I declare that I think Master Flageot a very honest procureur, and that my papers are as safe in his possession as in my own. Consequently, I shall leave them with him, of course paying him as if my suit were going on."

"It is well said, monseigneur, that you are a generous, liberal-minded man!" exclaimed Master Flageot; "I shall spread your fame far and wide, monseigneur."

"You absolutely overwhelm me, my dear procureur," replied Richelieu, bowing.

"Bernadet," cried the enthusiastic procureur to his clerk, "you will insert in the peroration a eulogy on the Marshal de Richelieu."

"No, no! by no means, Master Flageot! I beg you will do nothing of the kind," replied the marshal, hastily. "*Diable!* that would be a pretty action! I love secrecy in what it is customary to call good actions. Do not disoblige me, Master Flageot; I shall deny it, look you—I shall positively contradict it; my modesty is susceptible. Well, countess, what say you?"

"I say my suit *shall* be judged. I must have a judgment, and I will."

"And I say, madame, that if your suit is judged, the king must first send the Swiss guards, the light horse, and twenty pieces of cannon into the great hall," replied

Master Flageot with a belligerent air, which completed the consternation of the litigant.

"Then you do not think his Majesty can get out of this scrape?" said Richelieu, in a low voice to Flageot.

"Impossible, monseigneur; it is an unheard-of case. No more justice in France! It is as if you were to say no more bread."

"Do you think so?"

"You will see."

"But the king will be angry."

"We are resolved to brave everything."

"Even exile?"

"Even death, monseigneur! We have a heart, although we wear the gown."

And Monsieur Flageot struck his breast vigorously.

"In fact, madame," said Richelieu to his companion, "I believe that this is an unfortunate step for the ministry."

"Oh, yes!" replid the old countess, after a pause; "it is very unfortunate for me, who never meddle in anything that passes, to be dragged into this conflict."

"I think, madame," said the marshal, "there is some one who could help you in this affair—a very powerful person. But would that person do it?"

"Is it displaying too much curiosity, duke, to ask the name of this powerful person?"

"Your goddaughter," said the duke.

"Oh! Madame Dubarry?"

"The same."

"In fact, that is true; I am obliged to you for the hint."

The duke bit his lips.

"Then you will go to Luciennes?" asked he.

"Without hesitation."

"But the Countess Dubarry cannot overcome the opposition of parliament."

"I will tell her I must have my suit judged; and as she can refuse me nothing, after the service I have rendered her, she will tell the king what she wishes it. His Majesty will

speak to the chancellor, and the chancellor has a long arm, duke. Master Flageot, be kind enough to continue to study my case well; it may come on sooner than you think. Mark my words."

Master Flageot turned away his head with an air of incredulity which did not shake the countess in the least. In the meantime the duke had been reflecting.

"Well, madame, since you are going to Luciennes, will you have the goodness to present my most humble respects?"

"Most willingly, duke."

"We are companions in misfortune; your suit is in abeyance, and mine also. In supplicating for yourself you will do so for me too. Moreover, you may express *yonder* the sort of pleasure these stubborn-headed parliament men cause me; and you will add that it was I who advised you to have recourse to the divinity of Luciennes."

"I will not fail to do so, duke. Adieu, gentlemen."

"Allow me the honour of conducting you to your carriage."

"Once more, adieu, Monsieur Flageot; I leave you to your occupations." The marshal handed the countess to her carriage.

"Rafté was right," said he; "the Flageots will cause a revolution. Thank Heaven! I am supported on both sides, — I am of the court, and of the parliament. Madame Dubarry will meddle with politics and fall, alone; if she resists, I have my little pretty-face at Trianon. Decidedly Rafté is of my school, and when I am minister he shall be my chief secretary."

END OF VOL. II.



